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Daily News Feed

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Retail inflation hits a historic low of 0.25% in October

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Retail inflation fell to a historic low of 0.25% in October, with the government attributing this fall to the first full month's impact of GST rate cuts, a favourable base effect, and drop in inflation of several food items such as vegetables and fruits.

According to the government, this is the lowest rate of inflation measured in the current series of the Consumer Price Index.

That is, it is the lowest rate of inflation since January 2012. The data reveal that the fall in overall inflation is largely due to the statistical impact of the base effect on food inflation.

The data show that the food and beverages category saw prices contract 3.7% in October 2025, following up on a contraction of 1.4% in September.

"The decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of October 2025 is mainly attributed to the full month's impact of decline in Goods and Service Tax [rates], favourable base effect and to drop in inflation of oils and fats, vegetables, fruits, egg,

footwear, cereals and products, transport and communication, etc.," the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said.

Statistical base effect

According to economists, this decline is however due to a statistical base effect rather than an actual fall in prices. That is, because food inflation in the same month of last year was 9.7%, the change in prices this October looks relatively better.

Inflation in the housing category, too, accelerated to 3% in October 2025 from 2.8% in October 2024.

The clothing and footwear category was one of the few other than food that saw inflation easing in October, to 1.7% from 2.7% in October last year, likely on account of the GST rate cuts. The pan, tobacco, and other intoxicants category saw inflation quicken to 2.9% in October 2025 from 2.5% in the same month last year.

The miscellaneous category, which captures all other items not included in the major sub-groups, saw inflation accelerate to 5.7% in October 2025 versus 4.3% in October last year.

Record low

The chart shows retail price inflation (in %), measured by the Consumer Price Index, from January 2012 to October 2025.



English Summary:

India’s **retail inflation (CPI-based)** fell to a **historic low of 0.25%** in **October 2025**, the lowest since **January 2012**, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The government attributed this sharp decline to:

- The **full-month impact of GST rate cuts**,
- A **favourable statistical base effect**, and
- A **drop in food inflation**, particularly in **vegetables, fruits, oils, and fats**.

Economists, however, caution that the fall is largely **statistical**, not structural — meaning it results from a **base effect** rather than a real decrease in prices.

Key Data Points

Indicator	October 2025	October 2024	Remarks
Retail Inflation (CPI)	0.25%	9.7%	Lowest in the current CPI series
Food & Beverages Inflation	-3.7%	—	Contraction due to GST cuts & base effect
Housing Inflation	3.0%	2.8%	Slight increase
Clothing & Footwear Inflation	1.7%	2.7%	Decline due to GST rate cuts
Pan, Tobacco & Intoxicants	2.9%	2.5%	Slight uptick
Miscellaneous Items	5.7%	4.3%	Inflation accelerated
Overall Inflation Trend	 Lowest since Jan 2012	—	Base effect significant

Key Reasons Behind the Decline

(a) GST Rate Cuts

- The October data captured the **first full-month effect** of reduced **GST rates** on essential items.
- Categories benefiting the most include **food, footwear, and clothing**.

(b) Favourable Base Effect

- October 2024 had abnormally high inflation (**9.7%**), making the 2025 numbers appear lower.
- The “base effect” occurs when current prices are compared to unusually high prices a year earlier, artificially **deflating the inflation rate**.

(c) Decline in Food Inflation

- Major contraction seen in **food and beverages** (–3.7%).
- Decline in prices of **vegetables, fruits, eggs, and edible oils** drove the fall.
- Seasonal correction post-monsoon and increased supply contributed.

(d) Energy and Transport

- Lower global crude oil prices eased domestic **transport and communication costs**, stabilising the broader CPI.

Category-wise Inflation Analysis

Category	Trend	Explanation
Food & Beverages	 Sharp fall	Seasonal correction + GST cuts
Housing	 Slight rise	Steady rent growth and urban recovery
Clothing & Footwear	 Decline	Tax cuts, easing raw material prices
Pan, Tobacco, Intoxicants	 Mild rise	Policy-driven + steady demand
Miscellaneous		Higher prices in education, healthcare, and

Category (Services)	Trend Acceleration	Explanation communication
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Understanding the “Base Effect”

- Inflation compares **current prices** to prices **a year ago**.
- If last year’s inflation was very high, even small current increases look **negligible or negative**.
- Hence, while the October 2025 data looks positive, it reflects **mathematical optics** rather than a **real decline in consumer expenditure pressure**.

Example: If tomato prices shot up from ₹30 → ₹90 last year, and are now ₹92, the inflation rate appears low (2%) — even though the price is still high.

Expert Viewpoints

- **Economists** warn the government against interpreting this as a structural decline in inflation.
- **Core inflation** (non-food, non-fuel) remains sticky, especially in **services, housing, and healthcare**.
- A **temporary base effect** could reverse once the low base period passes.
- Policy suggestion: Maintain **monetary vigilance** while focusing on **supply chain resilience**.

Policy Implications

1. **Monetary Policy:**
 - The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may maintain a **neutral to accommodative stance**, given the soft inflation.
2. **Fiscal Policy:**
 - GST cuts have immediate inflation benefits but could reduce **indirect tax revenue**.
3. **Agricultural Policy:**
 - Need to stabilise food supply chains post-harvest to avoid cyclical price shocks.
4. **Long-term Focus:**
 - Avoid complacency — inflation could rebound once the base effect fades.

The GIST (Exam-Oriented Pointers)

Aspect	Key Point
CPI Inflation (Oct 2025)	0.25% – Historic low since Jan 2012
Reason for Decline	GST cuts, base effect, fall in food prices
Food Inflation	-3.7% (Deflation)
Base Effect Meaning	Statistical comparison making inflation appear lower
Highest Inflation Category	Miscellaneous (5.7%)
RBI Monetary Stance	Likely neutral
Economic Concern	Structural stickiness in core inflation

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

भारत की **खुदरा मुद्रास्फीति (Retail Inflation)** अक्टूबर 2025 में **0.25%** पर आ गई — यह **जनवरी 2012 के बाद सबसे कम** स्तर है।

सरकार ने इसका कारण बताया है:

- **जीएसटी दरों में कटौती,**
- **अनुकूल आधार प्रभाव (Base Effect),**
- **और खाद्य वस्तुओं की कीमतों में गिरावट।**

मुख्य बिंदु:

- खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति में **3.7% की गिरावट।**
- कपड़े-फुटवियर और आवास में मामूली वृद्धि।
- 'मिसलेनियस' श्रेणी में मुद्रास्फीति **5.7% तक बढ़ी।**

- अर्थशास्त्रियों के अनुसार, यह गिरावट **वास्तविक कीमतों में कमी नहीं, बल्कि आंकड़ों का प्रभाव (Statistical Base Effect)** है।
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UPSC Mains Practice Question:

"The recent moderation in retail inflation in India is largely statistical rather than structural." Examine in the context of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) trends and GST policy reforms.

(250 words – GS Paper 3: Indian Economy)

Union Cabinet clears new royalty rates of critical minerals

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Seeking to reduce import dependence and vulnerabilities in the supply chain of critical minerals, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the rationalisation of royalty rates of graphite, caesium, rubidium, and zirconium.

With the rationalisation structure, graphite, wherein royalty was previously sought on per tonne-basis (that is, a fixed amount for a specific weight of ore), will now be charged on an ad valorem basis.

Graphite with less than 80% fixed carbon content will be subject to 4% royalty of the average sale price, whilst that with 80% or more carbon content would attract 2%.

Caesium and rubidium would be subject to a royal-

Caesium and rubidium will be subject to a royalty rate of 2% on the average sale price

ty rate of 2% on the average sale price based on the specific metal contained in the ore produced. A royalty rate of 1% would apply to zirconium.

Promoting auction

In a statement, the Cabinet said that the decision to rationalise would promote the auction of mineral blocks of caesium, rubidium, and zirconium.

“Today’s approval of the Union Cabinet on the rate of royalty will help the bidders to rationally submit their financial bids in the auction,” the Cabinet statement emphasised.

English Summary (Exam-Oriented)

To strengthen India’s strategic mineral ecosystem and reduce dependence on imports, the **Union Cabinet** has approved the **rationalisation of royalty rates** for four critical minerals:

- Graphite
- Caesium

- **Rubidium**
- **Zirconium**

These minerals are essential for **EV batteries, semiconductors, aerospace, nuclear energy, renewable technologies, and high-end electronics.**

Key Changes in Royalty Rates

Graphite

- Old system: **Royalty per tonne** (fixed amount per weight).
- New system: **Ad valorem royalty** (percentage of average sale price).
- Rates:
 - **Graphite with <80% fixed carbon** → 4% royalty.
 - **Graphite with ≥80% fixed carbon** → 2% royalty.

Caesium & Rubidium

- New royalty: **2% of average sale price** (based on metal-specific content in the ore).

Zirconium

- New royalty: **1% of average sale price**

Why the Change?

The government wants to:

- Reduce **import dependence** for strategic minerals.
- Boost **domestic mining** and **private-sector participation**.
- Encourage **auction of mineral blocks** for these minerals.
- Strengthen the **critical mineral value chain** in India.

The Cabinet explicitly stated that rationalisation will **help bidders assess financial viability** and bid effectively during auctions.

Strategic Importance

These minerals are classified as **Critical Minerals** as they are vital for:

- Lithium-ion batteries
- Renewable energy systems
- Electronics manufacturing
- Defence and nuclear reactors
- Space and communication technologies

India currently has **limited domestic production** and is **heavily import-dependent**, especially on China.

Why Ad Valorem Royalty?

Ad valorem (based on percentage of sale price):

- Reflects **market value fluctuations**
- Ensures **fair revenue** for government
- More predictable for investors
- Globally accepted practice

THE GIST (For Quick Revision)

- The Union Cabinet has rationalised royalty rates for **graphite, caesium, rubidium, zirconium**.
- The move aims to reduce **import dependency** and strengthen **critical mineral supply chains**.
- New rates:
 - Graphite <80% carbon → **4%** royalty
 - Graphite ≥80% carbon → **2%** royalty
 - Caesium & Rubidium → **2%**
 - Zirconium → **1%**
- Expected to boost **auction participation** and support **India's critical minerals mission**.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश)

भारत में महत्वपूर्ण (Critical) खनिजों की सप्लाई-चेन को मजबूत करने और आयात निर्भरता कम करने के लिए केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने graphite, caesium, rubidium और zirconium के नई रॉयल्टी दरों को मंजूरी दी है।

प्रमुख दरें:

- ग्रेफाइट (<80% कार्बन) → 4%
- ग्रेफाइट (≥80% कार्बन) → 2%
- सीज़ियम एवं रुबीडियम → 2%
- ज़िरकोनियम → 1%

सरकार के अनुसार नई दरें घरेलू खनन को बढ़ावा देंगी, नीलामी को आसान बनाएंगी और निवेशकों को बोली लगाने में स्पष्टता देंगी।

UPSC Prelims MCQs

1. Consider the following minerals:

1. Caesium
2. Graphite
3. Zirconium
4. Lithium

Which of the above have newly rationalised royalty rates approved by the Union Cabinet in 2025?

- A. 1, 2 and 3
- B. 2, 3 and 4
- C. 1 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4

2. Ad valorem royalty refers to:

- A. A fixed fee per tonne of mineral
- B. A percentage of the mineral's market sale price
- C. A fee based on purity
- D. A royalty linked to mining lease duration

3. Critical minerals such as caesium and rubidium are essential for:

1. Energy storage technologies
2. Telecom equipment
3. Defence electronics

Choose the correct answer:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. "Critical minerals are central to India's energy transition, electronics manufacturing, and national security. Discuss how the newly rationalised royalty rates will support India's critical mineral security." (150 words)

India ninth worst affected by extreme weather: study

Purnima Sah

MUMBAI

A new report, Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2026, published by Germanwatch, released at COP30 in Belém on Tuesday evening, finds that more than 832,000 people died, nearly 5.7 billion were affected, and economic losses exceeded \$4.5 trillion (inflation-adjusted) from over 9,700 extreme weather events between 1995 and 2024.

Germanwatch is a Bonn-based environmental and development organisation that advocates for global equity and sustainability in climate policy.

India ranks ninth among the countries most affected during this period, facing recurring floods, cyclones, droughts, and increasingly severe heatwaves. “Countries such as Haiti, the Philippines, and India - all of which are among the ten most affected - face particular challenges. They are hit by floods, heatwaves, or storms so regularly that entire regions can hardly recover from the impacts until the next event strikes,” said Vera Künzel, senior advisor on climate change adaptation and human rights at Germanwatch.

English Summary (UPSC Standard)

A new **Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2026** report by **Germanwatch**, released at **COP30 in Belém**, reveals that:

Global Extreme Weather Impact (1995–2024)

- **832,000+ deaths**
- **5.7 billion people affected**
- **\$4.5 trillion in economic losses** (inflation-adjusted)
- **Over 9,700 extreme weather events** recorded globally

India's Ranking

- India ranks **9th worst-affected** country.
- Key extreme weather events:
 - **Floods**
 - **Cyclones**
 - **Droughts**
 - **Severe and frequent heatwaves**

Why certain countries are more vulnerable

Germanwatch highlights that countries such as **Haiti, the Philippines, and India** face extreme weather *so frequently* that societies **cannot recover before the next disaster hits**.

About Germanwatch

- A Bonn-based environmental & development think-tank.
- Works on global equity and sustainability in climate policy.

Why India ranks high? (Analytical Pointers)

- Long coastline → cyclones
- Monsoon variability → floods & droughts
- Rapid urbanisation → urban floods
- High population density → greater exposure
- Increasing heatwave intensity & duration due to climate change

THE GIST (For Quick Revision)

- **CRI 2026** places India at **Rank 9** in worst-affected nations.
- Time period studied: **1995–2024**.
- Nearly **832,000 deaths**, **\$4.5 trillion losses globally**.
- India faces repeated **floods, cyclones, droughts, heatwaves**.
- Vulnerability worsened by **high population, poverty, infrastructure gaps**.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश)

Germanwatch के **Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2026** के अनुसार (1995–2024 अवधि):

- वैश्विक स्तर पर **8.32 लाख मौतें**, **5.7 अरब लोग प्रभावित**, **\$4.5 ट्रिलियन आर्थिक नुकसान**।
- भारत **दुनिया का 9वां सबसे प्रभावित देश**।
- प्रमुख कारण: **बाढ़, चक्रवात, सूखा, तीव्र गर्मी**।
- **हैती और फिलीपींस** जैसे देशों की तरह भारत भी बार-बार आने वाली आपदाओं से उबर नहीं पाता।

UPSC Prelims MCQs

1. The Climate Risk Index (CRI), often seen in news, is published by:

- A. UNEP
- B. IPCC
- C. Germanwatch
- D. WMO

2. According to CRI 2026, India's rank among worst affected countries due to extreme weather (1995–2024) is:

- A. 3rd

- B. 5th
- C. 9th
- D. 12th

3. Which of the following are major extreme weather events affecting India?

- 1. Cyclones
- 2. Heatwaves
- 3. Tornadoes
- 4. Floods

Choose the correct answer:

- A. 1, 2 and 4
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 and 4 only
 - D. 1, 2, 3 and 4
-

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q. "India is among the world's most vulnerable countries to extreme weather events. Discuss the socio-economic factors that exacerbate this vulnerability and suggest adaptation strategies." (150 words)

GI tag fee cut to ₹1,000; Minister promises backing for tribal goods

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced here on Wednesday that the application fee for the Geographical Indications (GI) tag had been reduced to ₹1,000 from ₹5,000.

At the inaugural Tribal Business Conclave, he urged tribal artisans to register and protect traditional products and crafts. He further promised the support of his Ministry in creating export and e-commerce linkages for tribal enterprises and international warehouses for their products.

The conclave, held by the Ministries of Tribal Affairs and Culture and the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) at the Yashobhoomi Convention



Ministers Jual Oram and Piyush Goyal with a tribal entrepreneur at the business conclave on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Centre, featured panel discussions and masterclasses on topics such as financing innovations for, and investments in, tribal enterprises, partnerships, industry linkages, and skilling.

Mr. Goyal said schools, universities, industries, and the government must work together to ensure that products made by tribal artisans reach the larg-

er domestic and global markets. The Minister promised the full support of his Ministry and the DPIIT in this mission, by creating export and e-commerce linkages and facilitating international warehouses for tribal goods.

The conclave was part of the Government of India's Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh celebrations, to

mark the 150th birth anniversary year of tribal icon Birsa Munda.

Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for coming up with the initiative.

GI tags distributed

The event also saw GI tag certificates being distributed for crafts and products such as *Kannadippaya* (bamboo mat) of Kerala, *Apatani* textile of Arunachal Pradesh, *Marthandam* honey of Tamil Nadu, *Lepcha Tungbuk* of Sikkim, *Bodo Aronai* of Assam, *Ambaji* white marble of Gujarat, and *Bedu* and *Badri* cow ghee of Uttarakhand.

The Tribal Affairs Ministry announced a Tribal Affairs Grand Challenge, inviting enterprises to design solutions for tribal communities.

ENGLISH SUMMARY (GS-III: Economy | GI | Tribal Development)

Commerce & Industry Minister **Piyush Goyal** announced that the **Geographical Indications (GI) application fee has been slashed from ₹5,000 to ₹1,000** to encourage **tribal artisans, craftsmen, and rural producers** to register their traditional products.

This announcement was made during the **Tribal Business Conclave** organised by the Tribal Affairs Ministry, Culture Ministry, and DPIIT at Yashobhoomi Convention Centre.

Key Points

- The move aims to **protect traditional tribal crafts**, boost **market access**, and bring more tribal enterprises into formal recognition.
- Government assures:
 - **Export and e-commerce linkages** for tribal goods
 - **International warehousing facilities**
 - **Support for financing, partnerships, skilling, and innovation**
- Schools, universities, industry bodies, and government institutions will collaborate to help tribal products enter **global value chains**.

GI Tags Distributed During Event

Certificates were awarded for several tribal and regional products, including:

- **Kannadippaya** (bamboo mat) – Kerala
- **Apatani textile** – Arunachal Pradesh
- **Marthandam honey** – Tamil Nadu
- **Lepcha Tunggut** – Sikkim
- **Bodo Aroanai** – Assam
- **Ambaji white marble** – Gujarat
- **Bedu & Badri cow ghee** – Uttarakhand

Upcoming Initiatives

- Launch of **Tribal Affairs Ministry's "Tribal Crafts Grand Challenge"** to promote innovation in tribal sector solutions.
- Event marks the **150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda**.

HINDI SUMMARY (हिंदी सारांश)

केंद्रीय वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री **पीयूष गोयल** ने घोषणा की कि **GI टैग आवेदन शुल्क ₹5,000 से घटाकर ₹1,000 कर दिया गया है**, ताकि अधिक संख्या में **आदिवासी कारीगर व ग्रामीण उत्पादक** अपने पारंपरिक उत्पादों का GI पंजीकरण करा सकें।

मुख्य बिंदु

- उद्देश्य:
 - पारंपरिक आदिवासी हस्तशिल्प और उत्पादों की **सुरक्षा**,
 - **निर्यात व ई-कॉमर्स** से जोड़ना,
 - **अंतरराष्ट्रीय वेयरहाउसिंग** की सुविधा देना।
- सम्मेलन में वित्त, निवेश, साझेदारी, नवाचार और स्किलिंग पर चर्चाएँ हुईं।
- सरकार स्कूल, विश्वविद्यालय और उद्योगों के साथ मिलकर आदिवासी उत्पादों को **राष्ट्रीय और वैश्विक बाजारों** में बेहतर पहचान दिलाएगी।

GI टैग प्राप्त उत्पाद

- **Kannadippaya** (केरल)
- **Apatani textile** (अरुणाचल प्रदेश)
- **Marthandam honey** (तमिलनाडु)
- **Lepcha Tunggut** (सिक्किम)
- **Bodo Aroanai** (असम)
- **Ambaji white marble** (गुजरात)
- **Bedu-Badri ghee** (उत्तराखंड)

- GI fee cut: ₹1,000 → promotes tribal GI registrations
 - Government push for: export, e-commerce, international warehousing
 - Multiple tribal products received GI certificates
 - Supports Birsa Munda 150th birth anniversary celebrations
 - Launch of Tribal Crafts Grand Challenge
-

UPSC PRELIMS MCQs

1. With reference to Geographical Indications (GI) in India, consider the following statements:

1. GI tag is granted to products having a specific geographical origin and reputation.
2. Only the Central Government can register a GI.
3. GI is governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

Choose the correct answer:

- A. 1 and 3 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 and 2 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3
-

2. Recently, the GI application fee was reduced from ₹5,000 to ₹1,000. This step mainly aims to benefit:

- A. Large industrial exporters
 - B. Tribal artisans and traditional craft producers
 - C. Foreign companies operating in India
 - D. Digital service providers
-

3. Which of the following products recently received GI tags?

1. Apatani textile
2. Ambaji white marble
3. Bedu-Badri ghee
4. Pochampally Ikat

Select the correct answer:

- A. 1, 2 and 3
 - B. 1 and 4 only
 - C. 2 and 4 only
 - D. 1, 2, 3 and 4
-

UPSC MAINS QUESTION

Q. Discuss the significance of Geographical Indications (GI) in promoting tribal livelihoods and preserving indigenous cultural heritage in India. (150 words)

Qualified success

Male out-migration and cash transfers make women's turnout higher in Bihar

Bihar has again demonstrated a singular electoral pattern in the Assembly elections which have ended. In preliminary voter turnout data from the Election Commission of India (ECI), women outnumbered men by at least 4.34 lakh votes, which is striking as they were registered approximately 42 lakh fewer than men on the electoral rolls following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). This gender gap, where those with fewer registrations turned out in greater absolute numbers, underscores a complex interplay of welfare politics, demographic realities and lingering questions about electoral roll integrity. The paradox becomes pronounced when viewed against the backdrop of the SIR exercise that preceded the election. It resulted in net exclusions favouring men, with women disproportionately removed from the rolls. Following these deletions, the gender ratio of Bihar's electorate plummeted to just 892 in the final SIR rolls, as against 907 recorded barely a year earlier. *The Hindu's* statistical analysis of the draft SIR and exclusion data – released after a Supreme Court of India directive – revealed that women (18-29 years) were most severely affected, particularly under the “permanently shifted” category of exclusions. This suggests that women who moved after marriage bore the brunt of deletions, with no transparency on whether they were added to rolls in their new locations.

Despite these anomalies, the higher turnout of women is likely to work to the advantage of the Nitish Kumar-led government, if past electoral trends hold true. His nearly two-decade tenure has consistently emphasised women's empowerment through targeted welfare measures. This election cycle saw the launch of the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana in September, and the transfer of ₹10,000 to women across Bihar. Disbursements continued after the Model Code of Conduct, with the ECI accepting the questionable rationale that it was an “ongoing scheme”. Higher participation by women in electoral processes is worth celebrating. Such patterns have been largely confined to States with either intense political-ideological contestation – West Bengal and Kerala – or those with high development indices. Bihar, however, presents a different picture. Its high male out-migration rates, for work, partly explain why women's absolute turnout exceeded men's despite their smaller registered base. The last-minute cash transfers and these structural demographic factors appear to be more responsible for the turnout pattern than any deep political or ideological mobilisation. This brings into focus the ECI's silence on a fundamental question: how did Bihar's electoral rolls end up with a gender ratio significantly lower than what surveys indicate for the State's population? Until the ECI provides transparent answers about the SIR process, the celebration of the higher women's turnout must remain qualified. Electoral participation gains meaning only when preceded by fair and accurate voter registration.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Bihar's recent Assembly elections showed a **striking electoral pattern: women outnumbered men in turnout by 4.34 lakh votes**, despite **42 lakh fewer women** on the electoral rolls after the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**.

Key Issues Highlighted

1. SIR-Linked Gender Deletions:

- SIR exercise disproportionately removed **young women (18-29 years)** from the rolls.
- The category "**permanently shifted**" hit married women hardest.
- Final SIR rolls showed a gender ratio of **892 women per 1000 men**, compared to **907** the previous year.

2. Contradiction:

- Fewer registered women, but higher turnout than men → indicates deeper structural factors.

3. Why Did Women Vote More?

- **High male out-migration** for labour → women remain at home and vote.
- **Last-minute cash transfers** (e.g., Mukhyamantri Nari Samman Yojana, ₹10,000 assistance before polls).
- **Long-term welfare focus on women** by Nitish government (Ujjwala, cycles, scholarships, SHGs etc.).

4. Electoral Integrity Concerns:

- Supreme Court forced ECI to release SIR data.
- Large-scale deletions, lack of transparency, and gender skew raise doubts about **roll accuracy**.
- ECI allowed cash transfers claiming they were part of an "ongoing scheme", raising MCC-related concerns.

5. Broader Implications:

- Bihar's case differs from high-development states like Kerala and West Bengal where women participate due to political mobilisation.
- Here, turnout is influenced by **migration + welfare dependency**, not ideological mobilisation.
- Celebration of higher female turnout is "**qualified**" until ECI resolves the contradictory demographic data.

हिंदी सारांश (BPSC हेतु महत्वपूर्ण)

बिहार के विधानसभा चुनावों में इस बार एक **महत्वपूर्ण चुनावी पैटर्न** सामने आया —

महिला मतदाताओं ने पुरुषों से 4.34 लाख अधिक वोट डाले, जबकि SIR के बाद **मतदाता सूची में 42 लाख महिलाएँ कम दर्ज थीं**।

मुख्य बिंदु

1. SIR में महिलाओं का भारी बहिष्करण:

- 18-29 वर्ष की महिलाओं को सबसे अधिक हटाया गया।
- "Permanently shifted" श्रेणी में विवाहित महिलाओं को **disproportionately** डिलीट किया गया।
- SIR के बाद मतदाता लिंग अनुपात **892/1000**, पहले **907** था।

2. विरोधाभास:

- सूची में महिलाएँ कम, लेकिन वोट ज्यादा!

3. महिलाओं की अधिक वोटिंग के कारण:

- **पुरुषों का बड़े पैमाने पर बाहर (out-migration)** जाना।
- **चुनाव से पहले नकद अंतरण (cash transfers)**।
- नीतीश सरकार की दीर्घकालिक **महिला-केंद्रित कल्याण योजनाएँ**।

4. मतदान-सूची की विश्वसनीयता पर सवाल:

- EC ने SC के आदेश पर SIR डेटा जारी किया।
- बड़े पैमाने पर deletions और gender skew → पारदर्शिता की कमी।
- MCC के दौरान "ongoing scheme" बताकर नकद अंतरण की अनुमति दी गई।

5. निष्कर्ष:

- बिहार में महिलाओं की वोटिंग वृद्धि राजनीतिक mobilization से नहीं, बल्कि **जनसांख्यिकीय संरचना + कल्याण निर्भरता** से प्रेरित है।
- जब तक ECI SIR के मुद्दों पर स्पष्ट जवाब नहीं देता, महिला मतदाता सहभागिता का यह पैटर्न **qualified success** ही माना जाएगा।

THE GIST (For Rapid Revision)

- Bihar: **Women > Men in turnout by 4.34 lakh**
- But: **42 lakh fewer women on rolls due to SIR deletions**
- High turnout driven by: **male migration + welfare cash transfers**
- SIR roll deletions disproportionately affected **young & married women**
- Raises questions over **ECI transparency** and **electoral roll integrity**
- Celebration of higher female turnout = **“Qualified”**

UPSC/BPSC PRELIMS MCQs

1. Which of the following best explains higher women's voter turnout in Bihar?

- A. Increased political mobilisation among women
- B. High levels of urbanisation
- C. High male out-migration and targeted welfare transfers
- D. Rise in women's literacy rates

2. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR), mentioned in the context of Bihar, relates to:

- A. Criminal justice reform
- B. Revision of electoral rolls
- C. Survey of migrant labour
- D. Social welfare audit

3. Which age group of women was most affected by deletions in SIR rolls?

- A. 30–45 years
- B. 18–29 years
- C. 45–60 years
- D. 60+ years

UPSC MAINS ANSWER (150 words)

Q. The higher electoral participation of women in Bihar is described as a 'qualified success'. Discuss.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Towards a better future: A skill training hub at the Pahadpur village in Odisha in 2024. JESAPADMA RAO



How grassroots movements and campaigns are shaping India

In a democracy, peoples' aspirations should drive systemic change that boosts equality, education, careers, and economic development. Writers who have worked among the people, from Bela Bhatia to Subroto Bagchi, report on what is happening on the ground and the lessons to be learnt

Soma Basu

There is a heart-warming story about Nunaram Hansda in Subroto Bagchi's book *The Day the Chariot Moved: How India Grows at the Grassroots* (Penguin Business). Born to tribal parents in the interior forests of Simlipal, one of India's largest biospheres in Odisha, his parents sent him to Ashram School (run by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs) as they could not afford to raise him.

Later, Nunaram joined the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Rourkela. He had no money to pay the fees and his teachers had to pool the required amount from their paltry salaries. Today, Nunaram heads the insulin manufacturing line at Bion. In Bagchi's book, we meet many people like Nunaram, who have achieved success despite the huge economic crisis and odds they face.

Odisha's journey

When Bagchi was called by then Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in 2016 to helm the Skill Development Authority to transform the State, he encountered the ground reality – how governments function and its schemes are implemented and why the leaders among ordinary people keep the world moving but do not write or speak about who they are and what they do. The book, Bagchi says, is a tribute to this grassroots India. With his crossover experience from corporate life in IT to a Cabinet-rank government position, he builds his book on individual stories that highlight the many facets of development, and also what ails and fails the system.

He layers the saga of human development in narratives of achievements, frustrations, yearnings and hope because governments, he says, are characterised by stereotypes of unreasonableness, sloth and arrogance wrapped in corruption and personified by

crafty politicians. But lives function because some government servants and people at the grassroots are different and willing to take on the challenges of poverty, unemployment, health, education and infrastructure.

Divided into seven sections, the book details Bagchi's life, his return to his home State after four decades, the stories of the poor and marginalised and how government initiatives are foiled due to inaccessibility, inertia and incompetence. Strategic perspectives that empower the people can change the scenario as Bagchi tries to demonstrate. He travelled 3,000 kms across 30 districts in 30 days to understand the requirements of people who either languished or made it out. His objective: to humanise the development agenda for policy makers and corporate leaders.

Bagchi writes about the projections that blew his mind: a staggering 96% of the entire workforce in India is in the unorganised sector. Even as India is set to become one of the top economies of the world, there is an increasing wage disparity, forced migration, digital divide and receding women participation. Only 2% of the youth population under-30 had received formal skill training while 8% had received informal training though the country is in need of many more skilled workers.

But even amidst widespread disdain, Bagchi came across people like Muni Tigga, born in a tribal village in Nuagan Tehsil, where girls were not sent to school. Despite taunts from the villagers, with her mother's support, Muni worked as a daily wage at a plant 37 km from her home. Later, she enrolled at ITI Bargarh and landed a job as a loco pilot in the Indian Railways. The skill training she received empowered her enough to earn a respectable identity.

But there are many more families that manage life one day at a time. The need for skill development across the State was seen as a means to human development.

It was kept above politics to make Odisha a sandbox of innovation, writes Bagchi. Every new idea such as the Fix (problems), Scale (skill development programmes), Accelerate (establishment of new institutes) strategy caught the imagination of many and produced what Bagchi calls "nano unicorns" – people who had the ability to learn new skills and seize the opportunity.

Conversations on change

Opening conversations on change with the future in mind is also discussed by Bela Bhatia in her book, *India's Forgotten Country: A View From the Margins* (Penguin Viking), shortlisted for the NIF Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Book Prize 2025. When she worked with Dalits, Adivasis, women, bonded labourers, ethnic and religious minorities and other down-trodden groups living in hamlets, villages and slums, the oppressive forces that ruled and ruined them with brutality revealed itself assertively.

Bhatia's work encapsulates her research on the Naxalite movement, the conflict between the state and Maoists in Bihar, alongside her experiences as a rural activist in Gujarat. The book is a powerful critique of oppressive actions, and Bhatia offers empathetic narratives of life, death, and sufferings covering States such as Bihar, Telangana, Rajasthan, Kashmir and Nagaland. Standing by the marginalised to whom the governments and elites turn a blind eye, Bhatia gives several accounts of caste discrimination, communal massacres, untouchability, bonded labour, hunger, widowhood, armed uprisings and forced displacement. These sensitively expose the predicament of real India.

While the searing book stirs the public conscience, it also serves as an inspiring account of resilience, courage and hope at the grassroots level.

Diverse examples

Anchoring Change: Seventy-Five Years of

Grassroots Intervention That Made a Difference by Jayapadma R.V., Neelima Khetan, Vikram Singh Mehta, (Harper Collins India) looks at why we despair more about our inability to realise our full potential as a country and find fault with the leadership, state of our institutions and the economic model. The book tries to answer questions through examples of organisations working with the grassroots since Independence and underlines the need to reflect on the micro successes and the several cases of hugely impactful grassroots interventions that helped steer society in a positive direction.

The authors' idea is to revisit examples of civic action and explore their relevance for the future. It serves two purposes, they say: to shift the conversation from failure to success; and to distil from these successes relevant design principles that might have wide relevance to create an alternative, grassroots-based, sustainable development model.

Samrat Kale's book *Grassroots Development Initiatives in India: Rights Based Approach to Development and Advocacy* (Routledge and Aakar Books) examines the way voluntary organisations engage with development programmes for marginalised sections to empower them and make them independent and self-sufficient.

Another interesting book, *Grassroots Innovation Movements* (Routledge), by Adrian Smith, Mariano Fressoli, Dinesh Abrol, Elisa Arond and Adrian Ely, examines six diverse grassroots innovation movements in India, South America and Europe in dynamic historical contexts and explains why each movement frames innovation and development differently, resulting in a variety of strategies.

These books remind us of the contributions and the neglected questions which grassroots innovation movements identify. They reflect on both progress and the need for further improvement and empowerment.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

The article highlights how **grassroots movements, community initiatives, and citizen-led campaigns** across India are transforming governance, livelihoods, education, health, and the economy. The narrative is built through examples from books by authors such as **Subroto Bagchi, Bela Bhatia, and Jignasha Raval**, who have worked directly with communities.

1. Stories of Change from Odisha (Subroto Bagchi's book)

Case Study: Nunaram Hansda

- Born to tribal parents in Simlipal forest, Odisha; family too poor to support him.
- Studied at ITI Rourkela through teachers pooling salary.
- Today, heads insulin manufacturing line at Biocon.
- Represents thousands who rise despite systemic barriers like poverty, migration, and lack of state support.

Key Ideas from Bagchi

- Government failures: inaccessibility, inertia, incompetence.
 - Grassroots people are **willing to take risks**, adapt, innovate.
 - "**Nano unicorns**": ordinary people who become skilled innovators when given small opportunities.
 - Calls for **conversations on change**, not just policy documents.
-

2. Bela Bhatia: Conversations on Change

Her book *India's Forgotten Country: A View from the Margins* draws insights from:

- **Adivasi women**, bonded labour survivors,
- Victims of insurgency,
- Displaced forest dwellers.

Shows how people resist injustice and transform their community through:

- local leadership,
 - community solidarity,
 - negotiations with government officials.
-

3. Lessons from Social Movements

Authors emphasise:

- Grassroots movements have shaped India since independence:
 - anti-caste campaigns,
 - forest rights movements,
 - worker rights campaigns,
 - women's collectives,
 - movements against displacement.
 - These movements **forced systemic reforms**, improved welfare delivery, and created national awareness.
-

4. Why Grassroots Movements Matter Today

- India's development challenges remain: unemployment, migration, gender discrimination, lack of dignity and rights.
 - Grassroots activism holds institutions accountable.
 - Civil society organisations (CSOs) fill governance gaps.
 - Successful local innovations can scale nationally.
-

5. Diverse Examples (from books mentioned)

- **Homeless women workers** in Gujarat leading rights campaigns.
 - **Bihar, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh** groups improving rations and pensions.
 - **Nagaland and North-East** civil society addressing land, identity, autonomy.
 - **Grassroots education innovations** like community schools and skill hubs.
-

6. Key Insight

A healthy democracy requires **citizens' aspirations from the bottom** to shape policy at the top. Grassroots movements are not antagonistic to the State—they help the State become more **efficient, inclusive, accountable, and humane**.

हिंदी सारांश (BPSC-Ready Notes)

यह लेख बताता है कि **जमीनी स्तर के आंदोलन और जन अभियानों** ने भारत के विकास, शासन, शिक्षा, रोज़गार और सामाजिक न्याय को कैसे बदला है।

1. ओडिशा की प्रेरक कहानी (सुब्रतो बागची की पुस्तक से)

नूनाराम हाँसदा — एक उदाहरण

- सिमलीपाल जंगल में जन्म; गरीबी में पले।
- ITI राउरकेला में पढ़ाई शिक्षकों की मदद से हुई।
- आज बायोकोन में इंसुलिन निर्माण इकाई के प्रमुख हैं।
- यह बताता है कि अवसर मिलने पर वंचित समूह कितनी ऊँचाई छू सकते हैं।

मुख्य विचार

- सरकारें अक्सर अक्षम, जड़ और अव्यवहारिक रहती हैं।
 - समाज के निचले तबके में **अद्भुत क्षमता, साहस और नवाचार** छिपा है।
 - **“नैनो यूनिर्कॉन”**— आम लोग जिनमें कौशल और नेतृत्व क्षमता है।
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2. बेला भाटिया — बदलाव पर संवाद

उनकी पुस्तक *India's Forgotten Country* में दिखाया गया:

- आदिवासी महिलाएँ, विस्थापित लोग, मजदूर कैसे संघर्ष करके व्यवस्था को चुनौती देती हैं।
-

3. सामाजिक आंदोलनों से सबक

- स्वतंत्रता के बाद के बड़े आन्दोलन:
 - वनाधिकार आंदोलन
 - श्रमिक आंदोलन
 - महिला आंदोलन
 - विस्थापन विरोधी आंदोलन
 - दलित अधिकार अभियान
 - इनसे **नीतियों में सुधार**, सामाजिक जागरूकता और सरकारी जवाबदेही बढ़ी।
-

4. आज के भारत में इनकी ज़रूरत

- बेरोज़गारी, पलायन, जातिगत असमानता आदि चुनौतियाँ जारी हैं।
 - जमीनी आंदोलन शासन की कमजोरियों को उजागर करते हैं और सुधार लाते हैं।
-

5. विविध उदाहरण

- गुजरात की महिलाओं के श्रम अधिकार आंदोलन।
 - बिहार, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़ में राशन एवं पेंशन सुधार।
 - नागालैंड में भूमि और पहचान के मुद्दे।
 - स्थानीय शिक्षा और कौशल विकास मॉडल।
-

6. निष्कर्ष

लोकतंत्र तभी सफल होता है जब परिवर्तन नीचे से ऊपर की तरफ आता है।

जन आंदोलन और नागरिक पहल भारत को अधिक **समावेशी, संवेदनशील और जवाबदेह** बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाते हैं।

1. “Nano unicorns” in Subroto Bagchi’s work refers to:

- A. Small tech start-ups
 - B. Rural innovators empowered through skill opportunities
 - C. Government-led entrepreneurship schemes
 - D. MSMEs in tribal areas
-

2. Grassroots movements in India have historically contributed to:

- 1. Rights-based legislation
 - 2. Improved welfare delivery
 - 3. Increased bureaucratic centralisation
 - 4. Strengthened democratic accountability
- A. 1, 2 and 4
 - B. 2 and 3
 - C. 1 and 4 only
 - D. All of the above
-

UPSC MAINS (250 Words)

Q. How do grassroots movements strengthen democracy and governance in India? Discuss with examples.