

STOP WEAPONISING HORMUZ

The world is witnessing an increasingly dangerous trend: strategic waterways are being turned into instruments of geopolitical coercion. US President Donald Trump's recent warning that Washington could take control of the Strait of Hormuz and impose transit fees on ships if Iran failed to end the conflict is a disturbing example. Such rhetoric only deepens global uncertainty and threatens an already fragile world economy.

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most critical maritime choke-points, carrying a substantial share of global oil and gas supplies. Any disruption to its navigation has consequences far beyond the Gulf, affecting energy markets, inflation and economic stability across continents. Threat to control it has serious repercussions.

Equally troubling is the apparent collapse of the ceasefire understanding reached between the US and Iran. Instead of using the agreement to lower tensions, leaders on both sides continued exchanging hostile statements and threats of retaliation. The ceasefire appeared to exist more on paper than in practice. The latest exchange of missile strikes and military attacks has once again heightened tensions and disrupted maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

Responsibility for this deterioration rests with both Washington and Tehran. Iranian leaders should have exercised restraint instead of vowing revenge at a time when diplomacy still had a chance. The United States, too, has contributed to the escalation through inflammatory rhetoric and actions that have further eroded trust. The international community has little appetite for another prolonged conflict. The world is still recovering from the economic scars of the COVID-19 pandemic while grappling with the continuing war in Ukraine. A wider conflict in West Asia would place additional strain on global trade, energy supplies and financial markets.

Diplomatic efforts have also suffered from a lack of credible mediation. President Trump's unpredictable style has discouraged many influential nations from taking on the role of intermediary. While some countries have attempted back-channel diplomacy, these efforts have so far failed to produce a durable peace.

A rising Bengal for a stronger Bharat

Shukendu Sekhar Ray

A confident Bengal, firmly anchored in its civilisational heritage and fully aligned with the aspirations of a rising India, would indeed be the finest tribute to the vision of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and to countless patriots, whose sacrifices and lifelong dedication helped preserve the idea of an indivisible Bharat .

History often comes full circle. For generations, many believed that West Bengal, once the intellectual, cultural and nationalist nerve centre of India, had gradually drifted away from the ideals that shaped modern Bharat. Today, with the emergence of the state's first-ever BJP government in independent India, Bengal stands at the threshold of a historic transformation. For millions of people, this is not merely a change in political leadership; it represents the grand revival of an idea rooted in nationalism, cultural pride and inclusive development.

A new resurgent Bengal has begun to emerge, one that seeks to reconnect with its glorious civilisational heritage while embracing the aspirations of a modern India. The fresh wave of nationalism rising from the eastern frontier of the country is strengthening the spirit of national unity from East to West, reaffirming that India's unity in diversity is best preserved through a shared commitment to nationhood. For me, this transformation carries a profound personal significance. My hero and dearest father, late Shibendu Sekhar Ray, dedicated his life to the ideals of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the visionary founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. He regarded Dr Mookerjee not merely as a political leader but as a statesman who combined intellectual brilliance with extraordinary courage and selfless public service. His unwavering commitment to national integration profoundly shaped my father's life, which in turn influenced my own understanding of public service and patriotism. Long before the trauma of Partition, Bengal had already endured one of the greatest human tragedies in modern history, the catastrophic Great Bengal Famine of 1943. Millions of hapless, innocent Bengalis perished from starvation and disease. During this period of immense suffering, Dr Mookerjee emerged as one of Bengal's foremost humanitarian leaders. He organised hundreds of relief camps across undivided Bengal to provide food, shelter and medical assistance to famine-ravaged families. Dr. Mookerjee's relief initiatives became a lifeline for countless distressed families and demonstrated his unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people. The horrors of the Partition of 1947 inflicted another deep wound upon Bengal. Families were uprooted overnight, communities were divided, and countless innocent people became victims of violence, persecution and displacement. Amidst this tragedy, Dr. Mookerjee emerged as one of the strongest voices advocating the protection of the people of West Bengal and safeguarding India's national strength. His relentless efforts before the Bengal Boundary Commission ensured that substantial portions of Bengal remained within the Indian Union, thereby preserving not only its territory but also the cultural and civilisational continuity of the nation. Demographics

My father played a meaningful role in this historic chapter. At the instance of Dr. Mookerjee, he appeared before the Bengal Boundary Commission both as a Pleader and as a representative of the Hindu Mahasabha alongside the eminent barrister N. C. Chatterjee. Through persuasive legal arguments and careful presentation of demographic, historical and administrative facts, he successfully pleaded for the retention of Malda, then a Muslim-majority district, within the Indian Union. His contribution remains an important yet lesser-known chapter in the constitutional and legal struggle to protect India's territorial integrity during Partition.

It was therefore deeply moving when India's longest-serving Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, during his public rally in Malda, acknowledged Dr Mookerjee's historic contribution and remembered my father for his role during the turbulent years surrounding Partition. Such recognition transcends a single individual or family. It honours thousands of forgotten patriots whose sacrifices strengthened the foundations of an independent and united India. For decades after Independence, many in Bengal believed that the state gradually drifted away from its nationalist foundations.

Political priorities shifted, ideological battles intensified, and the cultural confidence that once defined Bengal appeared to diminish. The land that produced Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Swami Vivekananda, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Hindu icon Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee increasingly became a theatre of ideological polarisation. Many citizens have also expressed concerns regarding illegal immigration from Bangladesh, demographic changes in border districts, political violence and the weakening of institutions entrusted with preserving Bengal's rich cultural heritage. These concerns have remained central to public discourses for decades and continue to influence political debates throughout the state.

Supporters of the present political transformation believe that a nationalist government presents an opportunity to address these longstanding challenges through constitutional governance, stronger border management, effective law enforcement, transparent administration and policies that uphold equal justice for every citizen irrespective of religion, caste or community.

West Bengal's cultural legacy has always transcended narrow identities. It has produced poets, philosophers, scientists, freedom fighters, reformers and educationists whose contributions enriched not merely Bengal but the entire nation. Any meaningful effort to revive Bengal must therefore combine economic development with cultural renaissance, ensuring that future generations remain deeply connected to their civilisational roots while embracing innovation, entrepreneurship and global opportunities. The emergence of new leadership under my dynamic and fearless younger brother, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, has generated hope among many citizens who aspire for transparent governance, industrial revival, employment generation and social harmony. Having known him closely since our college days, I have witnessed his political evolution, his tireless organisational abilities and his unwavering commitment to public service. His leadership symbolises the aspirations of a new generation that believes Bengal can once again emerge as one of India's foremost states in industry, education, culture and governance. The road ahead, however, remains challenging. Restoring investor confidence, creating sustainable employment,

modernising infrastructure, strengthening education and healthcare, improving law and order and rebuilding institutional trust will require sustained effort, efficient administration and active public participation. Political change alone cannot achieve these objectives unless accompanied by accountable governance and a shared commitment to development. Equally important is the need to heal social divisions. Bengal's greatest strength has always been its tradition of intellectual openness, cultural inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence. Every citizen who respects the Constitution of India and contributes to nation-building deserves equal opportunity, dignity and justice. The enduring philosophy of "live and let live" must continue to guide Bengal's future. As we look towards the future, Bengal has a historic opportunity to reclaim its rightful place as India's cultural, intellectual and economic beacon. The state's exceptional human capital, entrepreneurial spirit, literary tradition, strategic geography and rich heritage can once again make it a gateway for economic growth, regional cooperation and national resurgence. Demographics

The generation that witnessed the famine, Partition and displacement must never be forgotten. Their suffering and sacrifice remind us that freedom carries responsibilities alongside rights. Preserving India's unity, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting constitutional values and protecting our shared civilisational heritage remain enduring national obligations. If this new chapter succeeds in restoring peace, attracting investment, reviving industry, celebrating Bengal's cultural richness, strengthening social harmony and reaffirming national unity, it will represent far more than a landslide electoral victory. It will mark the renaissance of a state whose contributions have shaped India's past and whose future can once again illuminate the nation's path to a Vikshit Bharat.

A confident Bengal, firmly anchored in its civilisational heritage and fully aligned with the aspirations of a rising India, would indeed be the finest tribute to the vision of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and to countless patriots, including my father, Shibendu Shekhar Ray, whose sacrifices and lifelong dedication helped preserve the idea of an indivisible Bharat.

ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN: AYATULLAH ALI KHAMENEI: A SHIA CLERIC

PROF VS MANHAS (RETD)
Deptt of Geography JU

Ruhollah Khomeini (1900/1902-1989) was an Iranian Shia cleric and politician who served as the first Supreme Leader of Iran from 1979 until his death in 1989. He is most recognized as the leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which overthrew the Pahlavi monarchy and transformed Iran into an Islamic republic.

Key Aspects of His Life and Legacy

Role in the Revolution: Khomeini was a long-time critic of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's secularization and Westernization policies. After spending years in exile (notably in Iraq and France), he returned to Iran in February 1979, where he was welcomed by millions and oversaw the collapse of the imperial government.

Velayat-e Faqih: While in exile, Khomeini developed the political theory of velayat-e faqih (guardianship of the Islamic jurist). This concept argues that Islamic scholars should hold supreme political and religious authority over the state, which became the foundational pillar of the Iranian governing system.

Governance: As Supreme Leader, he established a theocratic state. His rule was characterized by a strict adherence to Islamic law, a vehement anti-Western stance (particularly toward the United States), and a desire to export the revolution to other parts of the world.

Major Events During His Rule:

- Iran Hostage Crisis:** He supported the 1979-1981 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, where 52 American diplomats and citizens were held for 444 days.
- Iran-Iraq War:** He led Iran throughout the eight-year conflict with Iraq (1980-1988).
- Fatwa on Salman Rushdie:** In 1989, he issued a fatwa calling for the death of the author Salman Rushdie, labeling his book *The Satanic Verses* as blasphemous against Islam.
- Complex Legacy:** Khomeini remains a deeply polarizing figure. His supporters view him as a champion of Islamic revival, anti-imperialism, and sovereignty. Critics and human rights organizations often point to his authoritarianism, the suppression of political dissent, and various human rights violations during his decade in power.

Inside Iran, he is officially known as "Imam Khomeini," and his life and ideologies, often referred to as "Khomeinism," continue to heavily influence the current political structure and foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ali Khamenei served as the Supreme Leader of Iran from 1989 until his assassination in early 2026.

Key Details Regarding His Death and Succession:

- Assassination: Ali Khamenei was killed on



February 28, 2026, during a series of airstrikes conducted by the United States and Israel at the start of the 2026 Iran War. The strike targeted his residence and office in Tehran. His death was officially confirmed by the Iranian government on March 1, 2026. Several members of his immediate family were also killed in the same attack.

Succession: On March 8, 2026, the Assembly of Experts elected his son, Mojtaba Khamenei, as the third Supreme Leader of Iran. This marked the first dynastic succession in the history of the Islamic Republic, a development that has been both controversial and historically significant given the 1979 Revolution's original rejection of hereditary rule.

Funeral Proceedings: Following months of delay due to ongoing conflict, elaborate state funeral ceremonies were held for Ali Khamenei across Iran and in neighboring Iraq in July 2026. The processions concluded with his burial at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad on July 9, 2026.

Ali Khamenei's tenure, which lasted nearly 37 years, saw the significant expansion of the powers of the Supreme Leader's office, giving the role direct oversight over Iran's military, judiciary, and state broadcasting, while also exerting deep influence over foreign policy and the national economy.



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The missing grammar of land governance

Vivek Kumar Singh

India's land problem is not a shortage of laws, records or institutions. It is the absence of a shared grammar. The cadastral map, record of rights, mutation entry, registered deed, court order and actual possession often describe the same parcel differently. Citizens encounter these contradictions as delay, fraud or litigation. Administrators encounter them as files that refuse to match the field. The next stage of land reform by making the components of the land system intelligible to one another. The questions are no longer only who owns the land, but where the parcel lies, what supports the claim, who possesses it, whether each change is reflected in both record and map, and which institution must act when the answers diverge. India's land governance has passed through four broad phases. In the pre-colonial phase, land was tied to cultivation, sovereignty, custom and community. The colonial State made it administratively visible through surveys, settle-

ments, cadastral maps, records of rights, registration, revenue courts, the Collector and acquisition law, principally for revenue and control. Post-Independence policy shifted towards abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reform, ceilings, consolidation, Bhoodan, tribal land protection, homestead security, settlement of public land and acquisition for planned development. The fourth phase is digitisation and integration, which aspires to connect textual records, maps, transactions, municipal databases, court orders and physical possession.

These phases have accumulated rather than replaced one another. Colonial records coexist with unfinished reform mandates and new digital platforms. The contemporary land agenda therefore extends beyond title and mutation to delayed acquisition and compensation, displacement and rehabilitation, landlessness and settlement, fragmented holdings and incomplete consolidation, tenancy and customary rights, public land and commons, and urban expansion that often outruns both maps and law.

The fourth phase must not be mistaken for computerisation. Its purpose is not to place old records on new screens, but to make the State's memory of land reliable and current. An inaccurate paper entry remains inaccurate after scanning. Without cleansing, legal validation, audit trails, interoperability and continuous updating, digitisation merely gives inherited errors new authority.

This is why land problems are better understood as Land Ailments than as one undifferentiated category of disputes. A defective survey, unrecorded inheritance, fraudulent transfer, boundary mismatch, delayed compensation, insecure settlement, fragmented holding and encroachment on a common arise from different institutional failures. They require diagnosis before remedy. Triage must then determine urgency, conflict potential and the proper administrative, judicial or law-and-order response. A routine succession entry, a contested acquisition award and a communally sensitive encroach-

ment cannot be processed through the same lens.

The most useful field test is the Record-Map-Possession Triangle. Every serious matter should be examined through three questions: What does the record say? What does the map show? Who is in possession? When the three broadly agree, the claim is relatively stable. When they diverge, caution is essential. A record without possession may be contested or obsolete. Possession without record may be illegal, informal, customary or simply unregularised. A map without ground verification may not reflect subdivision, erosion, accretion, consolidation or urban change. The triangle is the diagnostic tool. Record-Map-Possession Convergence is the administrative objective. It means reconciling the three through lawful verification and continuous updating until the record identifies the right, the map locates the parcel and possession is either validated or addressed through due process. Digitisation can make this convergence dynamic only if it moves beyond textual updating. Where

States have created de novo digital maps through aerial photography, high-resolution satellite imagery or comparable geospatial methods, the next leap should be spatial mutation alongside textual mutation. A verified change arising from transfer, succession, partition, acquisition, subdivision or consolidation should, wherever legally and technically feasible, produce a corresponding spatial update. This can bridge the historic gap between what the register records and what the map locates on the ground. It is a transition the modern State cannot afford to miss.

Artificial intelligence can assist, but only as an auditable decision-support tool. In consolidation, it can compare parcel configurations using contiguity, access, irrigation, value and possession. In acquisition, geospatial analysis can test alternative alignments and flag avoidable impacts on habitations, commons and productive land before a route hardens into a project decision. In compensation, it can identify anomalies, omitted interests and likely liabilities. But AI

cannot cure defective maps, outdated valuations or incomplete records.

The same clarity is needed in the debate on title. The familiar contest between "conclusive" and "presumptive" title often freezes reform in abstraction. A more usable distinction is between foundational and current title. Survey and settlement provide the foundation through the original mapping and recording of parcels and rights. Mutation-backed records provide the current administrative frame by reflecting later transfers, succession, partition, acquisition, consolidation and court orders.

Mutation should neither be romanticised as final ownership nor dismissed as a meaningless fiscal entry. Civil courts remain necessary for complex title adjudication. Yet where mutation follows notice, objection, reasoned orders, appeal, revision and a digital audit trail, it represents the State's best administrative recognition of the current lawful claim, subject to judicial correction. Treating it as irrelevant weakens land markets, citizen services and the credibility of publication.

Acquisition shows why this grammar must extend beyond title. A project may have a valid notification and still failter because the alignment was poorly chosen, ownership data were outdated, valuation lacked transparency, compensation was delayed or possession was taken without completing rehabilitation and record correction. Acquisition should be managed as one chain from geospatial planning and social-impact assessment to award, payment, possession, rehabilitation and post-acquisition textual and spatial mutation. Compensation is the bridge between public purpose and procedural legitimacy.

At the other end lies landlessness. Settlement of homestead or cultivable land cannot end with a paper entitlement. The parcel must be identified, measured, made accessible, delivered in possession, entered in the record and protected against later dispossession. A settlement without secure possession and corresponding records is welfare announced but not delivered.