

# Special Gram Sabhas To Discuss Governance Reforms, Development Priorities At Village Level

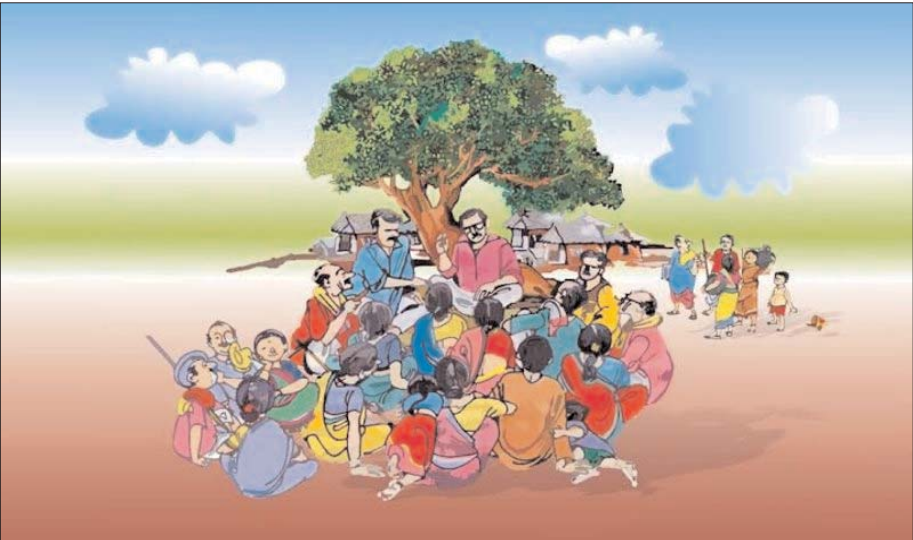
**NEW DELHI, OCT 1:** Special gram sabhas will be held across the country on October 2 to discuss governance reforms, implementation of key government schemes and development priorities at the village level, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj said on Thursday.

The special gram sabhas will also mark the launch of the People's Plan Campaign 2026-27, "Sabki Yojana, Sabka Vikas", under which gram panchayats will prepare their Gram Panchayat Development Plans for 2027-28 through participatory and evidence-based planning.

"The gram sabha discussions will bring together citizens and local representatives to review the benefits and implementation of key government schemes and initiatives, identify local needs and gaps and deliberate on priorities for the development of their villages," the ministry said.

The ministry, in collaboration with participating ministries and departments, is facilitating the discussions as part of a whole-of-government approach to grassroots development.

The initiatives to be highlighted include Finance Commission grants to panchayats, capacity building under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, digital governance through eGram-Swaraj and AuditOnline, own-source revenue initia-



tives, SVAMITVA and the Panchayat Advancement Index.

The Department of Rural Development will highlight the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G), providing a statutory guarantee of 125 days of wage employment, as well as the Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan for locally determined works and livelihoods.

The Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari: Catch the Rain, and revised watershed development norms will also be discussed.

The gram sabhas will also cover the One Nation One Ration Card, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, National Consumer Helpline, e-Jagriti and the Digital India Land Records Modernisation programme.

The discussions will promote awareness about the new criminal laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam -- besides digital transformation and strengthening of cooperatives.

Initiatives concerning the protection and dignity of women and children, including Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat and Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan, will also be discussed. As Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 culminates, the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 will also be taken up in the gram sabhas on October 2, the ministry said.

"The gram sabha provides citizens with a direct platform to share their experiences, feedback and suggestions on these schemes and initiatives, and to help determine local priorities," it said.

The People's Plan Campaign has been implemented across states and Union territories since 2018, enabling panchayats to prepare holistic, inclusive and participatory development plans.

More than 2.55 lakh gram panchayats prepare and upload their plans on eGram-Swaraj, according to the ministry.

The panchayat advancement index enables panchayats to identify achievements and gaps across key areas of local development and provides a basis for the gram sabha to identify priorities and take a pledge for the year ahead, it said.

Through 'Sabki Yojana, Sabka Vikas', the gram sabhas will reinforce participatory governance and contribute to building 'Sashakt Panchayats, Atmanirbhar Panchayats and Viksit Panchayats', it said. (Agencies)

# Manipulation of cell cleansing could help study its role in cancer, neurodegenerative diseases: Study

**NEW DELHI, OCT 1:** A cell's automatic waste clearance may now be externally manipulated, potentially helping researchers understand cell cleansing in cancer or Parkinson's disease, where the process is known to go awry, a study has shown.

The study was conducted by researchers at New Delhi's Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB) and National Institute of Immunology, Ashoka University in Sonapat and the US' University of California Los Angeles.

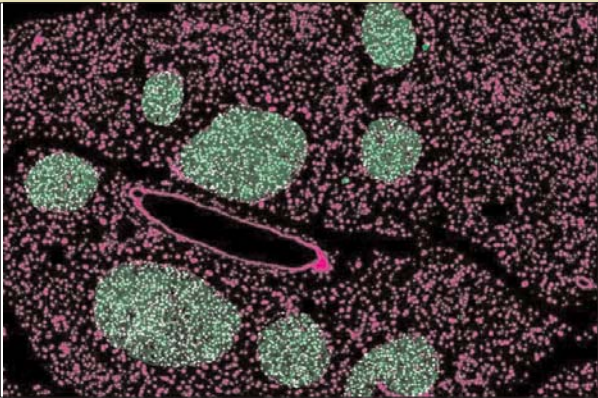
Autophagy is a recycling process whereby a cell clears out or recycles unwanted objects by forming a recycling bin-like cavity called an 'autophagosome'. The "recycling bin" of the cell grows a lining which encloses the cell debris, breaks it down and reuses the components for energy or new growth.

Among the triggers of autophagy, one is intermittent fasting, in which following long hours of fasting, low levels of glucose and amino acids signal the body to conserve energy. 'Phagy' in Greek means 'self-eating'.

The researchers observed the trajectory of the behaviour of a protein 'LC3', involved in autophagy, through simulations and found that it shifts shape upon touching the inner surface of a cell's recycling bin.

A computational analysis of the simulations of the protein LC3, followed up with experiments, revealed that for two mutant shapes, autophagy was very high and very low, respectively.

The series of mutations designed to either "activate autophagy in a hyper efficient way or switch it off" have been described in a paper published in the journal Nature Communi-



cations. "Autophagy is significantly linked with neurodegenerative disorders, including Parkinson's disease, and cancer," corresponding author on the study Lipi Thukral, a computational biologist, senior principal scientist and associate professor at CSIR-IGIB, Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), said.

Studies have shown autophagy to play a dual role in cancer -- it can suppress a tumour's growth by preventing an accumulation of damaged material, but can also promote survival of a cancer cell by helping it develop a resistance to anti-cancer agents, among other methods.

In neurodegenerative diseases, including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, autophagy is impaired, contributing towards a toxic clumping of protein aggregates within a cell, which can cause cell death.

"This is a study largely to say that autophagy, a cell's cleansing process, can be a very relevant therapeutic target. It (autophagy) can now be modulated, and anything which can be changed, you can study it in the disease condition. Because the moment you switch it off, you can now see what is happening in cancer or Parkinson's disease," Thukral told PTI.

"So, the study is a fundamental one, with the next step having a potential direct therapeutic impli-

cations. We have also put out international patents for these engineered proteins," she said.

Thukral proposed that an engineered LC3 protein could be potentially delivered within cells via lipid nanoparticles to see how enhancing or reducing the body's capability to perform autophagy changes the disease condition.

This is also a recent technology underlying mRNA vaccines, she said.

Messenger ribonucleic acid or mRNA vaccines, widely used against Covid-19, carry genetic instructions for a cell to create a harmless part of a pathogen, training the immune system to fight the real infection safely.

Thukral is currently working with collaborators in Germany and the UK to test out the programmable autophagy in cancer cells and Parkinson's disease.

Ravi Manjithaya, an autophagy researcher and professor and chair of the molecular biology and genetics unit, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru, described the study as a "tour de force" that combines computational analysis with rigorous experimental validation.

"It is almost like having a magic wand to clear the garbage in Bengaluru. If you understand where the bottleneck was and could directly target it, you can imagine how effectively the city could be made

garbage-free," Manjithaya told PTI.

"Now, at the molecular level, if you had a way of bringing the autophagy machinery directly to the garbage and accelerating its clearance, you would be doing something truly remarkable," he explained.

Manjithaya, who has been studying autophagy for more than two decades, said that the paper explains how to make the clearance of garbage more efficient.

"It is therefore a tour de force study -- not one that relies solely on computational predictions, but one that takes the findings through the entire spectrum of structural analysis, biochemical validation and cellular experiments," he added.

According to Manjithaya, one of the most immediate areas where such an approach could have implications is neurodegeneration, particularly diseases in which the accumulation of misfolded proteins or damaged mitochondria -- the energy-producing organelles of cells -- is a central problem. These include Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases.

"With the advent of AI/ML, computational structural biology is increasingly accessible even to scientists who are not specialists in the field. This creates an exciting test bed for generating a large number of new hypotheses based on how we interrogate and interpret biological structures," he said.

Thukral said, "When biology data and compute infrastructure align so beautifully, then we can have really meaningful discoveries.

That's what is happening in the current era. In a lot of ways, we are entering an era where it is predicted that we'll solve diseases at a greater pace."

# 75 pc of blood collection in India is through voluntary donation, says NITI Aayog member

**NEW DELHI, OCT 1:** Around 75 per cent of blood collection in the country is through voluntary donation, Dr M Srinivas, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, said on Thursday while underscoring the importance of rational and optimal utilisation of blood and its components.

Addressing the National Voluntary Blood Donation Day (NVBDD) 2026 programme observed at Swarn Jayanti Auditorium, Lady Hardinge Medical College, Dr Srinivas called for concerted efforts by the government, healthcare professionals, NGOs, voluntary organisations and youth organisations to further expand voluntary blood donation and address gaps between demand and availability.

He urged healthcare insti-

tutions, voluntary organisations and community groups to take these messages to the grassroots and contribute towards strengthening public awareness about the importance of blood, blood components and voluntary blood donation.

He also called for expanding awareness on blood health beyond blood donation to include related issues such as nutrition and anaemia, particularly among women and adolescent girls.

The event was organised with a renewed emphasis on strengthening the culture of regular, voluntary and non-remunerated blood donation to ensure a safe, adequate and sustainable supply of blood and blood components across the country.

The national observance was organised by the Blood

Transfusion Services (BTS) Division, Directorate General of Health Services (Dte. GHS), Union Health Ministry, in collaboration with Lady Hardinge Medical College and Associated Hospitals, Delhi.

The theme of NVBDD 2026 was "One Drop of Humanity. Give Blood. Save Lives".

The programme commenced with the inauguration of the voluntary blood donation camp and included administration of the voluntary blood donation pledge, addresses by dignitaries and felicitation of states, organisations and stakeholders for their contribution towards promotion of voluntary blood donation.

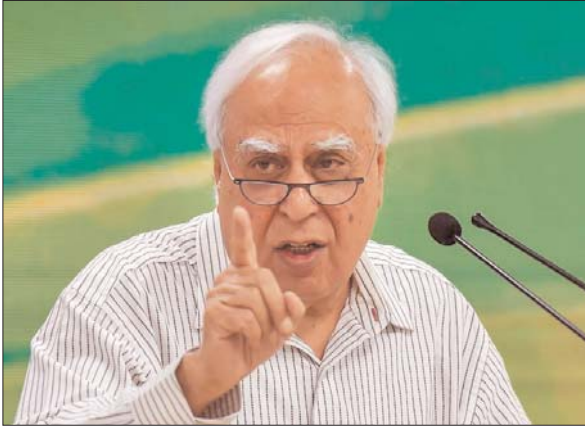
Addressing the gathering, Dr Srinivas highlighted the importance of voluntary

blood donation in ensuring an adequate and sustainable blood supply and emphasised the collective responsibility of citizens and stakeholders in strengthening voluntary blood donation.

He administered the voluntary blood donation pledge at the outset of his address and called upon citizens not only to donate blood regularly but also to create awareness and encourage greater participation in voluntary blood donation within their communities.

Acknowledging the contribution of blood donation organisations and volunteers towards the nation and humanity, Dr Srinivas noted that around 75 per cent of blood collection in the country is through voluntary donation. (Agencies)

# Sibal slams Parl panel's upcoming 'visit to SC for informal discussion' with judges on simultaneous polls



**NEW DELHI, OCT 1:** Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal claimed on Thursday that the joint committee of Parliament examining bills on simultaneous elections is set to visit the Supreme Court to have an informal discussion with judges on "One Nation, One Election", and said this is "unconstitutional" as well as contrary to the concept of separation of powers.

Sibal said the move is unprecedented and he has not seen something like this in his entire legal career as the panel would brief the judges on how good the law is when the same law is likely to be challenged before them at a later stage.

"The Government is briefing them on how good the law is. This is the same law against which a petition will be filed, and the Supreme Court will decide whether the petition is valid and whether the law should be struck down or upheld. I have never heard of anything like this in my legal career," the Independent Ra-

jya Sabha MP said.

"This is unconstitutional and contrary to the concept of separation of powers," Sibal said at a press conference here.

It is Parliament's right to pass laws and it is the court's duty to decide whether a law is right or wrong, he added.

Sibal claimed that a circulated document of the P P Chaudhary-led committee says that there will be a local study visit programme to the Supreme Court on October 6.

"So the Supreme Court will be told that we are going

to pass this law on which the Supreme Court will decide later whether it is right or wrong," he said.

Sibal said it has been listed as an informal discussion with the chief justice of India and other judges on the issue of simultaneous polls.

He said he was "very disturbed" upon hearing about this programme.

"When Parliament makes a law, there is discussion about that law, and the Bill that is circulated is also discussed. During the discussion, newspapers also publish the opinions of various

people. Some express their views in favour of the law, while others oppose it. Editorials are published as well. If it is a significant law that can have an impact on the country's future, it naturally receives more discussion," he said.

This is a good thing and should happen, so that when the law is passed, various aspects come to the fore, whether the law is constitutional or unconstitutional, he added.

"When a law is passed, Parliament does not examine whether it is constitutional or not. That is something the higher judiciary examines. If the law is unconstitutional, then naturally there will be petitions and the court will decide the matter.

"I have never seen that a parliamentary group has a meeting in the Supreme Court to tell the judges what the law is. I have never seen such an example in my entire legal career," Sibal said. (PTI)

# 'Tu Sher Hai': After Delhi PG Collapse, Jammu Man Seeks Secure Future For Son Admitted In ICU



**NEW DELHI, OCT 1:** "Tu sher hai sher," 67-year-old Darshan Dass says as he caresses his son's forehead sitting by his ICU bed, reminding the 20-year-old that enduring the darkness -- under tonnes of debris of the five-storey building which collapsed in Delhi's Satya Niketan -- was an act of sheer courage.

When Neeraj, a second-year undergraduate at Motilal Nehru College, left his home in Jammu for Delhi on a scholarship programme, the father thought his only son was headed towards the life he had worked to give him -- college education, a promising career, and the ability to 'stand on his own feet'.

It has been 25 days since the building in which his paying-guest accommodation was housed crumbled into dust and debris -- killing seven, including five students. Dass no longer thinks about his son's career. All he wants now is too see his son standing on his feet again -- made difficult by a fractured hip, deep lacerations around the groin and upper thighs, and injuries on his abdomen and back.

The distraught father wants assurance that his son -- who remains in the ICU (intensive care unit) of AIIMS nearly a month after the September 6 tragedy -- has a future.

"I want the government to give him some kind of job. If he is not in a condition to

study or work as he did before, he should at least have something to fall back on. Today he is in the hospital, and the government is helping, but what happens when he comes out? How will I afford his physiotherapy, medicines, equipment and any further treatment?" the retired serviceman tells news agency.

Dass said his son has undergone around six surgeries. "A machine has been inserted in his back, and another surgery is due soon. His left leg is completely stiff; there is only some movement in his right foot. The doctors have not told me how long this will continue or when he will be able to stand," Dass says, his eyes welling up.

The 67-year-old said he spends his days in the corridor outside the ICU, waiting for the next opportunity to see his son or for someone to tell him if Neeraj needs something. He goes inside when allowed, sits with his son for a while and, once

again, returns to the corridor -- where the hours stretch around the same unanswered question: "What will happen after this?"

For now, Dass said, Neeraj is being provided treatment free of cost. The Delhi government has also given the family Rs 5-lakh assistance, which he said has been of much help. But the retired serviceman, who receives a Rs 35,000 monthly pension, is worried how he will manage once his son is released from hospital.

Dass' wife died of pneumonia in 2016. Of their five children, four are daughters -- Neeraj the only son.

"Neeraj's mother died of pneumonia. I have done whatever I could for my family, but now, when I see my son lying like this, I keep thinking if his mother were here, perhaps he would have been better taken care of," the father laments.

The accident has also stalled Neeraj's education. His college principal has offered to arrange online

classes, but Dass says his son is currently not in a condition to think about studies or examinations.

"He asks me, 'How will I focus?' How can he study when he is lying there; he cannot even move his legs. He can attend classes online maybe, but how will he sit for examinations? Earlier, he was always thinking about what to do with his career, now, he doesn't know if he will ever be able to walk again," the father said.

It is difficult for Dass to recall the boy he had watched leave Jammu for Delhi. Neeraj had been a quiet, introverted child who spent most of his time studying. He studied at an Army school, and loved football. "He became a different boy after coming to Delhi. He worked on himself, became confident and made so many friends," Dass said.

He remembers the night he learnt his son was trapped beneath the collapsed building. Neeraj had returned to Delhi on August 29 after visiting Jammu for Raksha Bandhan on August 26. When footage of the Satya Niketan building collapse appeared on television, Dass noticed a rakhi on the wrist of one of the victims, recognising it as his son's.

"Beta, dekhna, yeh tera bhai toh nahi hai? (Look, is that your brother?)" he recalled asking one of his daughter. The PG in-charge called him several hours later.