

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPERATIVE

Ambulances are not just vehicles for patient transport-they are, in many cases, the first point of critical care during medical emergencies. Whether it's a road accident, a cardiac arrest, or a high-risk pregnancy, the difference between life and death often lies in the quality of immediate medical attention a patient receives. In this context, ensuring adequate life support facilities in ambulances is not just necessary, it is non-negotiable.

Across India, and even in some urban centers, there remains a concerning inconsistency in the standard of ambulance services. While some private hospitals operate well-equipped Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances, many public and even some private ambulances function without essential life-saving tools such as defibrillators, oxygen supply, ventilators, or trained paramedics. Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances are often mistaken for ALS units, misleading patients and their families about the kind of care being delivered en route to hospitals.

The National Ambulance Code, issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, clearly defines the types of ambulances and the minimum facilities they must carry. However, implementation and enforcement remain weak, especially in smaller towns and rural areas. In many cases, ambulances are simply used as transport vans, lacking both equipment and personnel capable of delivering emergency care.

The recent rise in non-communicable diseases and road traffic accidents has made the need for functional, well-equipped ambulances even more urgent. India records one of the highest numbers of road fatalities in the world, and studies show that a significant proportion of these deaths are preventable-if timely and appropriate care is given within the "golden hour."

To address this, a multi-pronged approach is essential. First, strict regulation and routine audits of ambulance services, especially those operating under government schemes like 108 and 102, must be carried out. Every ambulance, whether public or private, must adhere to the minimum standards outlined in national guidelines. Second, paramedics and drivers must be adequately trained not just in transport but in basic and advanced life support skills. Regular refresher courses and certifications should be made mandatory.

Third, the public also needs to be educated about the differences between ALS and BLS ambulances so they can demand the right care when needed. Hospitals and emergency response centers must be transparent about what services their ambulances offer.

Investment in pre-hospital care is not a luxury but a fundamental pillar of a resilient healthcare system. Adequately equipped ambulances can significantly improve survival rates, reduce long-term complications, and enhance the efficiency of emergency response networks. Governments, healthcare institutions, and private operators must come together to ensure that every ambulance on our roads is ready-not just to transport, but to save lives.

Strengthening Disaster Management for Sustainable Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Every year 13th of October is observed as the International Day for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction across the globe to create awareness on the risk of disaster reduction.This day was started in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly.The theme of this year International Day for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction is "Fund Resilience,Not Disasters".This theme highlights the urgent need to address the escalating costs of disasters by shifting focus from reactive response to proactive investments in disaster risk reduction.This day emphasises on two key actions:1.Increase funding for disaster reduction,within public budgets and international assistance.2.Ensure all public development and private investments are risk-informed and resilient. Natural or man-made disasters have been part of man's evolution since times immemorial. Various living creatures like the dinosaur, the Siberian tiger etc. are supposed to have vanished from the Earth due to some natural disasters, climate change, loss of habitat or even fall of meteors. The mysterious disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilization is also attributed by the historians to some disasters like the change of course of a river, a drought or an epidemic. Existing disasters risks can be minimized through a combination of various structural and non-structural measures including innovative mechanisms of risk sharing and risk insurance. We always need to get prepared for disasters management. Disaster preparedness means getting prepared for the management of disasters effectively as and when it strikes so that valuable lives can be saved and human sufferings can be minimized through various measures like evacuation, search, rescue and humanitarian assistance like shelter and relief. Preparedness further means having policies, strategies and resources for livelihoods, houses and infrastructures devastated during disasters. Disaster risk management is very important for sustainable development as damage and losses due to disasters are spiraling despite the plethora of measures taken to reduce such losses.

Disasters are becoming more frequent

,more costly and more devastating.Disasters are a growing threat to economic prosperity and sustainable development.It has been estimated that during the past two decades around 1.3 million people were killed, 4.4 billion people affected and 2 trillion dollars lost due to disasters. India too has a share of such losses. It has been estimated by the World Bank that the economic losses due to disasters during the late nineties and early years of this century were close to 2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and similar amount was not invested for public health in the country. Disasters eat away hard earned gains of development of over the years. Lack of development exposes vulnerable communities to the risks of disasters. Ironically development creates new risks of disasters, such as houses and infrastructure without compliance of zoning and building regulations are vulnerable; mining and industries in ecologically sensitive zones can destroy the natural system to disasters and fossil fuel based production and consumption increases the risks of climate related disasters. The Indian subcontinent is among the world's most disaster-prone zones. As per the current seismic zone map of the country, more than 59 per cent of India's land area is under threat of moderate to severe seismic hazard. Out of the total geographical area of 329 million hectares, more than 40 m ha is flood prone. On an average every year about 75 lakh hectares of land is affected and about Rs.1805 crores damage is caused to crops, houses and public utilities due to floods.

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir is a multi hazard prone region with natural disasters like floods, landslides, earthquakes, avalanches, fast blowing winds, besides man-made disasters like road accidents , fires etc. Human beings activities disturbs the ecological balance in many of the cases exacerbate the natural disasters. It has been observed that construction of roads or railway tracks in hilly areas of the state and unauthorized and unplanned construction on the river banks have disturbed the ecosystem. Top soil denudation for brick industry to support growing real estate industry has also

enhanced the human induced disaster risk. The frequency and intensity of flash floods, land sliding, earthquakes, cyclones, droughts etc. have increased and thus disaster management needs greater attention. There has been increase in the areas affected by drought, heavy precipitation, floods, earthquakes, landslides, soil creeps, avalanche falls etc in J&K state.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 embedded disaster risk management with specific targets for building disasterresilience across different sectors of development support' for disaster reduction. These are: (a) Early warning systems;(b) Emergency preparedness; (c) Slow onset events; (d) Events that may involve irreversible and permanent loss and damage; (e) Comprehensive risk assessment and management;(f) Risk insurance facilities, climate risk pooling and other insurance solutions; (g) Non-economic losses and (h) Resilience of communities, livelihoods and ecosystems.

India is the largest populous country, one of the fastest growing economies in the world. India holds the key position to achieve the goals and targets of sustainable development and disaster resilience. India has legal and institutional mechanisms at various levels and deployed scientific and technological capabilities for disaster risk management with clearly visible impacts on loss of lives as was during the meteorological disasters like cyclones Phailin and Hudhud. Recent disasters like floods,landsliding or cloudbursts in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and J&K caused a huge damage. Technological disasters like industrial or road accidents continue to increase; threats of biological disasters like epidemics and pandemics are looming large and environmental disasters like depleting water resources and increasing air pollution in rapidly in urban areas are causes of major concerns across the nation. India's capabilities of managing risks of earthquakes have not really been tested after the Kutch earthquake of 2001. Experts are warning about the major earthquakes can strike anywhere near thickly populated urban centres. India eco-

nomie growth is propelled by some of the new initiatives like Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan etc. There is need of planning, designingand implementing the development projects in different sectors to mitigate the risks of disasters. Although lots of efforts have been made in mainstreaming disasters risk reduction but not much has been achieved in this direction. The National Disaster Management Authority needs to come up with the general or specific guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and central and state governments departments need to develop concrete plans of action for disaster management.

Disasters are not strangers to mankind. Humankind has seen the earthquakes droughts, floods, famines, diseases, land sliding, tsunami etc. and yet it survived. That is the miracle of human existence - the ability to adapt to circumstances and overcome the catastrophe. This has been well proved during the September 2025 flash floods,cloudbursts and land sliding inHimachal Pradesh, Uttarakhandand Jammu and Kashmir when people helped each other,got support from Govt. and proved a tremendous effort of humanity. Preparedness and planning is necessary to handle disasters both by the governments and the community. Organisations like the National Institute of Disaster Management and National Disaster Management Authority are required to prepare pre-disaster management plans. Awareness on disaster management among the people is very important as sometimes a little knowledge can help a long way to mitigate the bad consequences of a disaster. People, especially from disaster prone areas should be trained to anticipate disaster and to deal with it in case the disaster actually happens. Effective communication is the keyword and a well-thought out communication strategy can assist in disaster management. We cannot stop the disasters but we can minimize them and strengthen ourselves with the knowledge, so that the valuable lives can be saved.

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Seat-Sharing Standoff: Bihar's War of Ambitions

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

As Bihar braces for its high-stakes assembly elections, the political climate in the state is heating up with every passing day. The tussle over seat sharing between alliance partners has thrown both the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the opposition Mahagathbandhan, also known as the INDIA bloc, into confusion and chaos. With the nomination process for the first phase of polling-scheduled for November 6-having begun on October 11, uncertainty continues to grip both camps as they struggle to finalize seat distribution and select candidates. The intricate dance of alliances, negotiations, and rival ambitions underscores how political equations in Bihar are undergoing rapid transformation. What was once considered a predictable political theatre has now turned into an unpredictable battleground, driven by shifting loyalties, inflated ambitions, and the persistent challenge of balancing regional aspirations with national compulsions. The seat-sharing imbroglio reflects the difficulty of managing pre-poll alliances in a state where every constituency carries historical, social, and caste-based weight, and where the margin

between victory and defeat often depends on fragile coalition arithmetic.

Within the NDA, talks have been intense yet inconclusive. Sources within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) indicate that internal seat-sharing negotiations are nearing completion and may be formalized within a couple of days. Once that happens, the party is expected to release its first list of candidates. The Janata Dal (United), or JDU, led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, is reportedly preparing to announce its list soon thereafter. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), headed by Chirag Paswan, has emerged as a particularly assertive ally, demanding 45 seats, while the NDA leadership has so far offered only between 20 and 22. As discussions continued through Friday, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the BJP's in-charge for Bihar, arrived in Patna to oversee the negotiations personally. Insiders speculate that a settlement could be reached soon, with BJP likely to contest around 101-102 seats, the JDU about 102-103, and the LJP between 20 and 23, while smaller allies like Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and Rashtriya Lok Moreha (RLM) might receive around seven seats

each.

Meanwhile, in a surprising twist, Prashant Kishor's recently launched outfit, Jan Suraaaj, took the lead by announcing its list of 51 candidates on Thursday, capitalizing on the indecision of the larger alliances. Kishor's move not only demonstrated political agility but also sent a clear message that Bihar's political space is ripe for new entrants willing to act decisively while established coalitions continue to bicker over numbers. In Delhi, negotiations also gained momentum as Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai met Chirag Paswan for the second consecutive day, claiming that the talks were moving in a "positive direction." Nevertheless, the growing restlessness among smaller allies reflects the deeper malaise within both alliances: a clash between aspiration and accommodation. Regional parties in Bihar, which rely heavily on the organizational strength and resources of national parties, now seek greater autonomy and visibility. This dynamic is not new to Bihar's politics, but it has grown more pronounced in an era of competitive populism and social media-driven political branding. Political observers in Patna note that the ongoing confusion within both the

ruling NDA and the opposition INDIA bloc reveals the inherent fragility of coalition politics in the state. Seat-sharing negotiations have become less about ideological compatibility and more about survival, visibility, and symbolism. For smaller parties, the number of seats contested translates into political legitimacy; for larger parties, conceding too many seats means the risk of eroding their dominance. The resulting tension has produced a deadlock that mirrors the complex nature of Bihar's multi-layered political ecosystem.

The Mahagathbandhan, led by the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), faces similar turbulence. Its allies-particularly the Left parties-are reportedly discontented with what they describe as "unrealistic" and "insulting" offers. While the RJD remains the principal force within the opposition bloc, its attempts to balance ally expectations have proven difficult. The INDIA bloc, which initially sought to project a united front against the NDA, now finds itself entangled in the same web of ego clashes, electoral calculations, and internal rifts. The unfolding drama has also brought an unusual poetic touch to Bihar's political discourse. Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) chief and former Chief

Minister Jitin Ram Manjhi invoked lines from Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's Rashmirathi to press for a fair share of seats, turning a negotiation table into a stage of lyrical protest. His poetic appeal, though couched in metaphor, carried unmistakable political meaning: the struggle for recognition and respect within an alliance dominated by larger partners. Across the aisle, some Mahagathbandhan leaders have also resorted to emotive rhetoric, calling their seat offers "insulting proposals" that undermine the spirit of partnership.

This interplay of poetry and politics, of negotiation and nostalgia, captures Bihar's unique political culture-where historical memory, personal pride, and power play often intersect. Every election in the state unfolds like a complex narrative of continuity and change, with alliances made and unmade, leaders rising and fading, and ideologies morphing to fit the contours of convenience. What makes the current situation even more intriguing is the absence of a clearly defined leadership face in both major camps. While Nitish Kumar remains the most experienced administrator in the state, questions persist about whether he still commands the same influence he once did. The opposition

bloc, meanwhile, has not been able to project a single credible chief ministerial candidate capable of uniting its diverse partners. This leadership vacuum, combined with the internal friction over seat distribution, has injected an additional layer of uncertainty into the political contest.

As Bihar gears up for yet another fiercely contested election, the atmosphere is charged with intrigue and anticipation. Beyond the visible disagreements over numbers lies a deeper churn - the generational shift in leadership, the tussle between traditional vote banks and new political aspirations, and the test of whether alliances built on convenience can withstand the pressures of ambition.

In the final analysis, the ongoing tussle over seat sharing is not merely about arithmetic. It is a reflection of the larger transformation sweeping Bihar's political landscape-where poetry meets pragmatism, where rhetoric masks rivalry, and where every seat has become a symbol of survival. Amid this backdrop of uncertainty and ambition, one truth remains: in Bihar's ever-evolving political theatre, every handshake is tentative, every promise conditional, and every alliance-fragile yet fiercely fought for.

Caring for the elderly senior citizens



■ GL KHAJURIA

The Webster's Eneyclopedic Dictionary defines a senior citizen (US) an elderly person over 65 of age who is retired and living on pension. In indian contest, the law in shrines a senior citizen any person, a citizen of India who has attained the age of 60 years or above. As per the population data of 2011 census there are around 104 million elderly persons aging 60 years and above. Out of this enormous numbers males count for 51 million and 53 million.

As per united nation organization (UNO) population fund and help India report, it suggests that the number of elderly person is expected to go upto 173 million ending year 2026. From year 1961 to 2011 (50 years span), the increased percentage has jumped from 5.6% to 8.6% which is astonishing and alarming too. The elderly report 2016 reveals that 715 of the population reside in rural areas whereas 29% inhabit in the urban areas. In rural areas 66% elderly are men and around 11% women working within 60 to 65 years age group.

The reports further reveal that 76% persons are quoted married while 22% are widowed or divorced per elderly in India ending year 2016. With the passing years viz a viz inadequate caring the elderly persons are prone to multihued diseases e.g Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Mentle ailments owing to anxiety and depression leading to the eventualities of death. At this crucial dilemma, more intensive caring is warranted for the elderly persons which, if so facto is not so. The scenario is painful and dismaying.

All through toiling life span, elderly persons scarify every bit for their siblings which ultimately go on diminishing and flicking and they have to the dead end of the tunnel. They have to face a multitude of challenges despite the fact that their siblings are well established and can look after them. The agony and pain they suffer stings them beyond imagination. This sad state



of utter neglect follows their all hopes and aspirations and tears rolled in isolation and they have to solely solace themselves.

As per the policy of government, euphemism is warranted to the senior citizens are elders. These include physical, mental and physiological cares elevating from emotion stress else they are prone to anxiety, depression and age old ailments of multihued manifestations. But ironically, these grey citizens are facing a plethora of physiological and emotional distress, isolation and

dependency thereby worsening the age old agonizing dilemma.

Compare to last century, there had been a steady rise in the population of elderly people owing to age longevity, decreased death rate and above all advancement in the field of medicines that way there had been an increase in the life expectancy. As per UN population report, number of elderly person above 60 years. In India will increase from 100 hundred million at present to more than 325 million ending year 2050.It has also

pointed out that elderly person over 80 years of age shall be seven fold and India shall be second most age old country in the world. The figure reflect a gloomy scenario in the sense that 50 to55 million people sleep as hungry stomach every night and around 10-15 million people in India are blind and out of those 80% are elderly. Moreover elderly population of 60 years and above account for 7.5%-8% in Jammu and Kashmir alone.

In the Changing social milieu, the younger generation is subject to search avenues for economic dependence for the elderly/ senior citizen when all doors seem to be shut owing due to inadequate Job Avenue despite having their higher qualification and claim both in the professional training and allied expertise. With mounting urbanization coupled with modernization in unison are abysmally eating human values in more than one way leave aside caring for the elderly are the senior citizens.

Right from the day a child is born, the parents leave no stone unturned for the well beings and the best for their upbringings he or she should be left behind insofar as educational and extracurricular activities are concerned. And for such conscientious parents the hopes and aspirations do not make a stop. They put in the best of their efforts to make their famed brain to foreign drain; we call this as brain drain thus depriving their motherland and landing on foreign soil for better pay and perks with indelible stamp of being exported. The irony behind is that those who did all their dints in encountering all oddities and squabbles are their elderly parents or to say senior citizens. The so departed souls forget their culture, traditions and other rituals to the extent of their centuries old ethics and ethos.

Does our education system inculcate this sort of way out of demeaning of demeanor? Why those who fed and cared for are being fended and left in lurch at the mercy of god. This is much more irony of any kind. The teacher and the taught should reciprocally interact so that out progeny picks up the thread for caring their oldies and for all in respecting and caring for senior citizens.

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