

Cabinet Minister Shelar Calls for Innovators as Lions Clubs Highlight Rs. 500 Cr Annual Community Investment

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Emphasizing the need for collaboration in driving social change, **Ashish Shelar**, Cabinet Minister of Information Technology & Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra, called upon innovators, changemakers, and researchers in the We Serve India National Awards to participate in the state government's quarterly roundtable discussions. Echoing this vision, Arvinder Pal Singh, International First Vice President of Lions Clubs International, highlighted the Lions Clubs' growing investment of over Rs. 500 crores annually in community development at the event.



We Serve India National Awards

The We Serve India National Awards, an initiative by Lions Clubs International and Forbes India, brought together experts, innovators, researchers, and entrepreneurs among others, to celebrate individuals and organizations making meaningful contributions to society. The event, held in Mumbai as the grand conclusion to zonal events in Guwahati, Kochi, and Surat, honored grassroots efforts and large-scale impact projects in areas such as women's empowerment, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

Shelar reiterated the government's commitment to developing an environment where service-driven organizations and individuals can thrive. *"Service is the foundation of a progressive society. We must design and synchronize efforts that drive social upliftment, and I invite all those making a difference to contribute their insights at our government's roundtable discussions,"* he said.

The evolving role of social service organizations in India was a key theme of the evening, as Singh elaborated on the changing dynamics of the Lions Clubs. *"We operate in an era of collaboration, local stakeholders know their communities best, and our role is to empower them through resources and structured support. Whether through microfinance initiatives that uplift women or health campaigns bridging awareness gaps, our goal is to create sustainable impact,"* he stated.

Experts also pointed out the growing engagement of younger generations in service initiatives, with Singh advocating for their inclusion in leadership roles. *"We must provide young people with the opportunity to lead in their own way. At Lions Clubs International, we have two members from younger generations on our international board, ensuring fresh perspectives guide our mission,"* he added.

In unison, experts said that as large-scale community initiatives grow, the real measure of success lies in their tangible impact on the ground. Ensuring that those being served feel genuinely supported and empowered. Impact assessments have become a crucial tool in evaluating outreach efforts, helping organizations refine their strategies for maximum effectiveness. Partnerships between public welfare programs and grassroots organizations have demonstrated the power of community-driven advocacy, where real change happens when people engage with those they serve, not just for them. Recognizing and celebrating these efforts not only validates their importance but also inspires a wider culture of service and collaboration.

Speaking on this initiative, **Sidharth Saini, Chief Operating Officer, News18 Studio** said, *"Were honored to celebrate the tireless efforts of individuals who selflessly serve their communities. These awards recognize the real, unsung heroes who drive our nations progress. By shining a light on their work, we as a leading news network aim to inspire a wave of service and empower others to contribute to nation-building."*

Among those honored were Abhishek Ray, Bollywood Composer and Singer, for Wildlife Conservation; Raimati Ghuria, Tribal Farmer from Odisha, also known as **Queen of Millet**, for Sustainable Agriculture; Aditya Jitendra Kumar Mehta, Founder, Aditya Mehta Foundation, for [Educational Learning](#) & Skill Development, Seema Sayyad, Manager, Aastha Parivaar, for Women's Empowerment; Preethi Srinivasan, Founder, Soulfree Trust, for Health Care and Sanitation; and Janani Venkitesh,

Environmentalist, for Waste Reduction and Recycling.

The inaugural edition of the We Serve India National Awards by Lions Clubs International and Forbes India highlighted the expanding role of service-driven initiatives across the country. By recognizing individuals and organizations making a measurable impact, the event underscored the growing collaboration between government, nonprofits, and grassroots efforts in addressing key social challenges.

