

U-WIN PLATFORM: Let's all celebrate a pollution-free Green Diwali

The U-WIN (Universal Workforce Identification Number) platform is an innovative initiative aimed at revolutionizing the way services are accessed and delivered...

At its core, U-WIN seeks to create a robust digital infrastructure that connects students, educational institutions, and employers. One of its primary goals is to enhance transparency and efficiency in the educational and employment sectors.

A key feature of U-WIN is its emphasis on skill development and employability. The platform provides access to various vocational training programs and courses tailored to meet the demands of the job market.

Furthermore, U-WIN fosters collaboration among educational institutions, training providers, and employers. It acts as a conduit for sharing information about job openings, internships, and skill development opportunities.

User-friendly and accessible, the U-WIN platform is designed with the needs of its diverse user base in mind. Students can create personal profiles, track their educational progress, and receive tailored recommendations for skill development.

Data security and privacy are paramount in the design of U-WIN. The platform employs robust security measures to ensure that sensitive information is protected.

Moreover, U-WIN is committed to inclusivity. It seeks to reach a broad audience, including marginalized communities, by providing resources and opportunities that cater to their unique needs.

SURJIT SINGH FLORA

Diwali is a very important festival for most Indians especially Hindu and Sikh community. It also marks the beginning of the new year according to the Hindu calendar. It conveys the feeling of victory of darkness and light and victory of good over evil.

While Sikh community celebrate this festival on the day of Sri Harmandir sahib on the day of Diwali when the Sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib ji rescued 52 kings from the prison of Mughal Emperor Jahangir from the fort of Gwalior. They celebrate in the joy of returning to Harmandir sahib.

This common festival is also called the festival of lights and on this day, people celebrate this festival with pomp and show by lighting lamps and bursting firecrackers in their homes. Since centuries it has been celebrated by lighting lamps and making everything bright sunshine, hence it is also called Deepavali.

Another aspect of Diwali that has grown exponentially over the past 3 decades is the rampant use of fireworks to celebrate it. The amount of pollution produced by crackers used during the festival of Diwali is also incalculable. Nowadays, firecrackers are not used only on Diwali, but they are also used during other festivals.

Crackers have started to be used indiscriminately on national festivals, Jagran, Nagar Kirtans and also on the occasion of marriage. But on the occasion of Diwali, the crackling of firecrackers is a little more than the four bells. This results in four round environmental pollution.

Air quality index has crossed Delhi's air pollution continues to be classified as 'very poor,' with an average AQI of 304, influenced by low wind speeds. Areas such as Anand Vihar and Narela reported hazardous levels ranging from 407 to 488, whereas adjacent regions exhibited more favorable conditions.

the cities of Punjab, this level has become very poor, which is a very worrying issue. The most noticeable thing is that bursting firecrackers on Diwali produces a large amount of smoke.

Most firecrackers produce very fine particles of 2.5 pm (particulate matter) or 10 pm. These particles are often so fine that they reach the lungs, where they freeze forever. Some even get involved in the blood from there.

This definitely makes the air very harmful to breathe. This harmful effect of firecrackers lasts for several days after Diwali. With the increasing pollution of Diwali, the air quality index is feared to increase further.

Land pollution is another important type of pollution that occurs during Diwali. It is definitely caused by leftover pieces of burnt crackers. Apart from this, it takes several weeks to clean the residue of these crackers.

Noise pollution is another important and major problem during Diwali. Crackers cause a lot of noise pollution. Most notably, this noise pollution is quite damaging to hearing ability. Apart from this, noise pollution is also a big problem for animals, elderly, students and sick people.

The highest noise level that the human ear can tolerate without damage is 85 decibels while the average noise level of firecrackers is 125 decibels. As a result, many cases of ear damage and hearing loss are reported in the days following the explosion of firecrackers everywhere.

According to the World Health Organization, the safe level of any sound for our ears is less than 85 dB. Any sound above 85 decibels for a long period of time can cause temporary damage to the sensitive tissues of the ear or even permanent hearing loss.

The meaning of this festival is changing due

to fireworks, pomegranates and riots. The toxic gases emitted from them not only harm the environment but also pose a risk of fire and injury to the body. These pyrotechnics or disturbances caused by fire sometimes fall on the dry slum huts of poor people and the entire family loses their lives.

Crackers mainly contain sulphur, antimony sulphide, barium nitrate, aluminium, copper, lithium and strontium and carbon. Young children are more sensitive to the adverse effects of this type of pollution than adults.

Copper and lithium compounds can cause hormonal imbalances. Although these chemicals can cause a variety of diseases from Alzheimer's to lung cancer to respiratory problems, people still do not refrain from firing crackers.

Blowing firecrackers can have serious harmful effects on people suffering from mental health problems. The noise alone is enough to raise the anxiety level and the fact that the noise starts 20 days before the festival and continues till about 15 days after. This noise pollution is highly effective in disrupting sleep and increasing stress.

In extreme cases, stress can become life-threatening. Unfortunately, in our country India, mental health is probably not given much importance. Perhaps that is why the damage to mental health caused by firecrackers is not given much importance and firecrackers are not stopped.

Moderation is essential for attaining balance in life. It is important to recognize that the act of birth poses significant challenges to ecological balance. By celebrating everything in moderation, we can ensure that the environment remains unharmed. The Earth possesses a remarkable capacity for self-rejuvenation. It is similar to our body, which experiences fever and, following appropriate medication and rest, returns to its original state.

As the kabir rightly said "Ati Ka Bhala Na Bolana, Ati Kee Bhalee Na Chooop, Ati Ka Bhala Na Barasana, Ati Kee

Bhalee Na Dhoop" which means it is not good to speak and rain in excess, everything to be done in a moderate way.

In examining festivals across various religions, it becomes evident that many of them contribute to environmental degradation and harm. For instance, the celebration of Christmas results in the cutting down of millions of trees worldwide. Red meat is a significant contributor to global warming, and during EID, meat consumption reaches an unsustainable level.

The objective is to live and appreciate life with a sense of balance. Moderation is beneficial for both the individual and the planet. A blanket ban on any item should be avoided. It is essential to advocate for celebrating in the most effective manner.

Diwali is undoubtedly a very happy time for humans but for animals and birds it is the saddest time of the year. As pet owners say that during Diwali, the noise of firecrackers is overwhelming for animals and their hearing is also greatly affected.

First of all, people should strictly avoid firing crackers. If you have to celebrate Diwali by bursting firecrackers, then the second option is eco-friendly firecrackers also available in the market. So people should use eco friendly crackers. These eco-friendly crackers produce less noise and not only pollute the environment.

Still, the best solution is to avoid using crackers. So we should make sure to keep our environment pollution free so that people inside the house or office can breathe safe and clean air. This Diwali, we can celebrate a pollution-free festival by saying no to crackers.

Diwali is one of the most auspicious occasions of happiness in India. Let's not let this beautiful festival be ruined by the evil of pollution. The most important thing is that the festival should be immediately made environment friendly. We all should take appropriate steps to celebrate a pollution-free Diwali and should support the administration and governments.

(The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton).

Meeting Food security under Water Scarcity: the boon from FLDs

DR PARVEEN KUMAR, DR RAJ KUMAR

Ji, Ji, Janaab... was the prompt reply by Mr. Rajinder Singh from village Champa in district Ramban when asked whether Hybrid Maize varieties provided by KVK-Ramban had made any difference in the yield as compared to the local varieties they grow.

Dr. Parveen Kumar SMS (Ag. Extension) at KVK-Ramban states that Agriculture landscape in this hilly region has some peculiar issues which include mono-cropping and low yield. The size of land holdings here is small and land holdings lay as small fragments at many places.

Pertinent to mention that the rain fed regions are very vital for ensuring food and nutritional security of the masses living in the country. Farming thus needs to be protected, productive and profitable in these regions.

In this 'Kharif' season, such was the plight of farmers that due to poor rainfall and consequent moisture stress, farming community had to go for resowing three times particularly in the lower belts of the district. Being a Kharif crop, it grows best in the rainy season with wet and hot climates and sufficient soil moisture.

According to Dr. Raj Kumar, the farming community here has been using old local varieties of maize whose productivity is too less. The crude methods of sowing and cultivation of these crops further worsened the things. Since the establishment of KVK-Ramban at Dhalvas in the year 2022, High yielding and Hybrid varieties of different crops including fruits and vegetables like Maize, French beans, Peas, Radish, Lady finger, Cabbage, Cauliflowers, Tomato, Knolhol and millets specific to the climatic conditions of the region are being provided to the farmers' of this region.

Dr. Parveen Kumar further told that in the previous Kharif season too, farmers were provided hybrid seeds like Kanchan-517 Super, Star Gagan Gold for laying

FLDs on 0.5 acre of land/farmer. Four kilogram of seed was given to them at the rate of one kilogram per kanal. Dr. Parveen Kumar SMS (Ag. Extension) while highlighting the importance of these varieties told that various demonstrations have been laid out on farmer fields with these varieties. The previous results on the yield and economics of FLDs provided by KVK-Ramban revealed that average yield of demo plots was 26.5 qtls/ha as compared to 18.2 qtls/ha of local varieties grow by the farmers.

Rani Devi, a farm woman told KVK-Ramban team that the no. of cobs per plant of hybrid varieties are more than one unlike the local varieties which had only one cob per plant. The size of cobs and that of grains in the cobs is also bigger. The plant attains a greater height, has more biomass and thus an excellent source of nutrition as animal fodder. The adoption of scientific cultivation practices such as line sowing has also reduced their seed requirement per unit area to one third.

Knowledge is Power: The path to progress and conquer divisive politics

P K MAM

"Knowledge is power"-it transforms darkness into light, providing hope and strength. The pursuit of knowledge and continuous learning, rather than relying on physical strength, has been the cornerstone of resilience and success for even the smallest of nations.

Likewise, Singapore overcame its limitations by investing heavily in education and fostering a merit-based system. Today, it stands as a global financial hub, proving that prioritizing intellect over populism leads to long-term success.

In contrast, negative tactics like mobocracy, rowdiness, and populism weaken societies by prioritizing divisive and impulsive actions over intelligence and merit.

they ultimately erode long-term progress. When meritocracy succumbs to mobocracy whether due to political, social, or other pressures the core ideals of democracy and equality become compromised.

The countries, referred to above, again, serves as an example of how meritocracy-rewarding talent and ability-leads to sustained national strength. Instead of giving in to mob-driven politics, these countries rely on intellect and innovation to overcome threats.

Those with intellectual ability must recognize that their true power lies in their knowledge. Rather than being discouraged by political manipulation, they should leverage their expertise to guide the nation toward unity and progress. Knowledge and merit are enduring forces, while political uncertainty is fleeting.

counter the divisive tactics often used in electoral politics.

True success lies in cooperation, learning, and intellectual strength, as knowledge and righteousness invariably triumph, ensuring the growth and survival of humanity. Highly skilled technocrats in areas like medicine, engineering, AI, biotechnology, space science, agriculture, aviation, mining, water and life support systems, and finance will continue to be in high demand, where zero error is crucial. Their expertise ensures safety, precision, and risk-free outcomes, critical not only in times of peace but also in moments of crisis, whether during war or in routine service to society.

The purpose of education is to empower minds. As Socrates said, the goal isn't merely to teach facts, but to inspire inquiry and critical thinking. A curious mind is always alive, always learning. The future belongs to those who continue to question and seek knowledge.

Higher educational institutions must guide students through these shifts, ensuring they are prepared for the evolving job market. In addition, India faces issues like poor infrastructure, devotion of teachers, power shortages, and bureaucratic hurdles that need addressing. We need to foster a spirit of healthy competition, where true merit shines through effort, integrity, and dedication.

Unlike countries like China, Taiwan, and South Korea, where employment in industry led to a steady rise in skill levels, India's development has been uneven. Many of India's human resources remain untapped, limiting the nation's growth potential.

In conclusion, knowledge is the one asset that cannot be stolen. It is the most powerful tool for progress and unity. Both educators and students must embrace their roles with accountability. Educators should not just be employees but professionals dedicated to shaping the future.

As J. Krishnamurti said, educators must first educate themselves before helping others break their limitations. The question remains: are they willing to challenge their own boundaries? Only then can they inspire the next generation to build a brighter future for the nation.

'Let's Encourage Our Children to Love Their Eyes'

DR NITIN

Recently, while examining patients in the ophthalmic OPD room at AIIMS, Vijaypur, I examined a young child being brought in by his parents. This child was not able to see clearly. His parents informed us that he had poor grades in examinations this year. He was not going out to play and was mostly confined indoors.

This might be a common story in our households, but many children may not be wearing glasses. Uncorrected refractive errors among children are a common cause of visual impairment. This may lead to poor performance in studies and low self-esteem. A small intervention like wearing glasses can dramatically improve the quality of life.

There may be a genetic predisposition (mother and father have refractive errors), or they are mostly confined indoors, leading to lesser utilization of far vision. These may also be linked to the changes in the size of the eyeball till the child reaches adulthood. While some of the factors, like genetics, are non-modifiable, encouraging children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and making them play outdoors rather than watching television and video games can be highly beneficial.

There needs to be limited, monitored screen time for most of the children, while "No" screen time for the youngest ones (less than 18 months of age). Routine eye checks can go a long way in detecting refractive errors to sight-threatening diseases in children. This will protect the vision of our future generations.

The Government of India has been proactive and initiated programmes like Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), a subsection of which deals with the universal eye screening of newborn children to look for any ocular abnormalities.

The other ocular abnormalities commonly seen in children include congenital cataracts, congenital glaucoma, retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), retinoblastoma, lid abnormalities, ptosis, amblyopia, squint and retinal diseases. ROP necessitates a special mention, as it is a disease affecting the retina of premature babies, any child born before 34 weeks of gestation or having weight less than two kilograms at birth or having adverse events at birth like exposure to oxygen, infections, prolonged NICU stay should be screened before the 30 th day of life. The Screening will help to detect the disease and manage the patient to avoid blinding complications.

A routine yearly eye examination of children can go a long way in the early detection of ophthalmic diseases and in preventing visual impairment of our young, loved ones. So, let us pledge to protect our children's vision and encourage them to "Love" their eyes.

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