

#### **U-WIN PLATFORM**

he U-WIN (Universal Workforce Identification Number) platform is an innovative initiative aimed at revolutionizing the way services are accessed and delivered, particularly in the context of education and skill development. This online system is designed to streamline various processes associated with educational institutions, vocational training, and employment opportunities, making it easier for users to navigate the complexities of the educational land-

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. By offering a centralized platform, U-WIN facilitates the management of student data, including enrollment details, academic performance, and skill certifications, all in one place. This not only simplifies record-keeping but also empowers students to take ownership of their educational journeys.

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. Users can explore different career paths, enroll in relevant training programs, and acquire skills that are in high demand. By bridging the gap between education and employment, U-WIN aims to equip students with the necessary competencies to succeed in their chosen fields.

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. Employers can easily find candidates whose skills match their requirements, while educational institutions can gain insights into industry needs, allowing them to adjust their curricula accordingly. This synergy between education and industry not only enhances employability but also contributes to a more skilled workforce.

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. Educational institutions can manage admissions, track student performance, and share data with relevant stakeholders. Employers can access a pool of potential candidates and collaborate with educational institutions to develop training programs that align with their workforce

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. Users can feel confident that their data is safe, allowing them to engage with the platform without concerns about privacy breaches.

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. By making education and skill development accessible to everyone, U-WIN aims to empower individuals from all backgrounds to pursue their goals and contribute to

# Let's all celebrate a pollution-free Green Diwali

**■ SURJIT SINGH FLORA** 

iwali 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. Hindus celebrate it in celebration of Lord Rama's slaying of Ravana and his return to Ayodhya with his wife Sita after 14 vears of exile.

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. There is also a negative side attached to this great festival.

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. In Punjab, they are now being used in almost every religious event.

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 pollution is the biggest type of pollution on Diwali. Apart from this, during the festival of Diwali, air pollution increases to dangerous levels. Nowadays, the level of air quality index has also increased

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. Even in

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

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. Some of these pollutants are produced as part of natural processes. For example, dusty clouds are the result of some human activities. As with construction work or stub-

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. Apart from this, air pollution is also quite harmful to various animals and birds.

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. The most remarkable thing is that these pieces are non-biodegradable in nature. Therefore, they are not easily disposed of but gradually become toxic over time.

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. Children, pregnant women and people suffering from respiratory diseases are more affected by high noise levels.

The meaning of this festival is changing due

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. Barium nitrate can cause respiratory disorders, muscle weakness and even gastrointestinal problems.

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

Effect of crackers on mental health

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 lifethreatening. 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. If we continue to neglect the body, it will deteriorate, and we will perpetually remain in a state of ill-

As the kabir rightly said Ati Ka Bhala Na Bolana, Ati Kee

Bhalee Na Choop, Ati Ka Bhala Na Barasana, Ati Kee

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. Other religions may not exhibit the same level of tolerance as Hinduism, which is why we often do not highlight the destruction they

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.

Effect of crackers on animals

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 gov-

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## Meeting Food security under Water Scarcity: the boon from FLDs

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR, DR RAJ KUMAR

-i, 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. This year our area did not have sufficient rainfall so local varieties have not come up to our expectations. The farming community here was apprehensive of a drought like situation due to deficient rainfall, but some rainfall later on prevented that situation. Breathing a great sigh of relief, Mr. Singh further told that it would have been a condition of food scarcity for the farming community of the region, had they not received the varieties by KVK-Ramban. This is not the story of Rajinder Singh only, but most of the farming families in this region from different villages where KVK-Ramban had laid out FLDs on Farmer fields with Hybrid maize varieties. The varieties provided were climate resilient able to withstand the moisture stress resulting in a production with which they can at least feed their families. They are now worried that they will not have to purchase the modity from the market

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. Mechanization here is a difficult task given the topography and terrain of land in this mountainous tract. Peoples can be seen manually ploughing their small fields with spades. Farmers are still using outdated varieties which give very low yields. Besides climatic vagaries, the farming community here also is confronted with lack of quality seeds/seedlings, lack of credit facilities, lack of marketing support, absence of linkages, low yield of livestock and much more. The problems are further compounded by the vulnerability of these regions to rising temperature. The district is almost rainfed with a negligible 5% under irrigation. Further due to very small size of land holdings accompanied by mono-cropping in this district, the cost of cultivation of different crops often exceeds the net returns and thus farming community feels betrayed and want to quit farming community. 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. In this district, it is grown once in a year and sowing here starts in the month of June with the onset of pre-monsoon showers that give it the necessary moisture to germinate. The lack of pre-monsoon showers resulted in moisture stress and hence farmers had to go for resowing. Also, the productivity of the crop in the farmer fields in the district is not at par with the national average.

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 Dhalwas 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. The Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) programme of KVK-Ramban aims to further augment the production of different crops in this district. The FLDs establish the production potential of new varieties in the farmer fields. KVK Ramban has been providing FLDs to the farming community on different crops like Maize, French bean and Strawberry. The high quality Maize seed like Kanchan-517, Star Gagan Gold and Super Heera 909 provided to them have given a yield which is 40-50% more than the traditional varieties grown by the farmers here.

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. Accordingly the benefit cost ratio calculated was much higher for FLDs (1.9) as compared to check (1.6). Besides providing seed, the farmers were also sensitized on various aspects of their cultivation like land preparation, seed rate, control of weeds, time of sowing, appropriate dosage of fertilizers/manures, right time for various inter-culture operations, right time of harvesting and storage of produce and precautions to be taken during harvesting and its storage.

Rani Devi, a farm women 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 coh 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. The increase in production coupled with the reduction in the cost of cultivation has resulted in considerable increase in their income. Owing to the positive feedback obtained from the farming community of this region, KVK-Ramban is aiming at bringing more and more area under hybrid and high yielding varieties by ensuring that the seed of these varieties is made available to them well in time and in more quantity. The farming community has expressed satisfaction over the efforts of KVK-Ramban and thanked Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-J Prof. B. N. Tripathi and Director Extension Prof. Amrish Vaid under whose mentorship and guidance the KVKs of region are working for the upliftment of farming community.

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

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. A detailed examination revealed that the child had bilateral Myopia (inability to see clearly for far, a refractive error). The child used to sit in the front row at the school to see the board and was not faring well in his studies. The parents were concerned about his vision and grades at school and more so about the treatment of the disease, which is glasses. The questions of parents included, "Will he require glasses?" He is so young; Why does he need glasses? "Can he do away with glasses?", Will he get bullied at the school?" The parents were counselled and advised to make the child wear the prescribed glasses for far vision. The parents and the child complied with our instructions. The next hospital risit was a pleasant surprise: the child had topped his was jolly, playing with friends, was spending time outdoors, and his parents were relieved and happy.

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. The myths associated with wearing glasses need to be debunked, and any bullying needs to be stopped. Moreover, smaller children may not even know that they are not seeing well or have any ophthalmic disease. Parents and teachers who spend most of their time with young children can suspect visual impairment or other eye diseases at the earliest. So, if parents or teachers notice that there are problems with the child's navigation in his surroundings or that there is a decline in his performance at school, they should keep in mind that there may be something wrong with the child's vision. Causes of refractive errors in children may be multi-factorial.

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 eve 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 abnormal-

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

nowledge 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. A prime example is Israel, a small nation surrounded by adversity, yet it has thrived by harnessing knowledge in science, technology, and strat-

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. South Korea, once ravaged by war, has now emerged as a global leader in technology and innovation, thanks to its strong emphasis on research and development. Germany, with its focus on engineering and vocational training, continues to be a world leader in industrial and technological advancement. These nations highlight the power of meritocracy in shaping national strength.

In contrast, negative tactics like mobocracy, rowdyism, and populism weaken societies by prioritizing divisive and impulsive actions over intelligence and merit. Although these approaches may deliver short-term gains,

they ultimately erode long-term progress. When meritocracy succumbs to mobocracywhether 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 meritocracyrewarding 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

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. By placing merit and technology at the forefront of its development, India can set an example for the world, ensuring a united and stronger future. After all, a nation's strength is built not just on policies but on the quality of minds it nurtures. When politics cater too much to populism, productivity suffers, and divisions deepen. In fact, a merit-based system, builds a nation's strength by valuing intellect, hard work, and technological advancement. By promoting a culture that values knowledge and merit, the Indian Government can 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. While respecting diverse beliefs, the educational system should remain free from religious interference. This allows it to focus on fostering critical thinking, merit, and scientific inquiry, ensuring future generations contribute meaningfully to national

However, challenges remain. As industries restructure, fresh graduates will need to continuously update their skills to stay rele-

vant. 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. Deceptive practices not only undermine personal growth but also erode

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.

the values that lead to genuine success.

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.