

Journey Towards Transformation

The story of Jammu and Kashmir over the past few years is one of resilience, reform, and remarkable transformation. Once a region constrained by complex political and developmental challenges, J&K today stands at the threshold of a new era defined by peace, progress, and promise. The change has not been accidental; it is the result of deliberate policy reforms, transparent governance, and a people-driven vision for inclusive growth under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. Since the reorganization of the erstwhile state into a Union Territory in August 2019, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed sweeping administrative and developmental reforms. The focus has shifted from political rhetoric to tangible outcomes that directly touch people's lives. The Union Territory's governance model emphasizes efficiency, transparency, and accountability—three pillars that had long been eroded by decades of political instability and corruption. The introduction of e-governance initiatives, the strengthening of the Panchayati Raj system, and the establishment of direct beneficiary transfer mechanisms have revolutionized the delivery of public services. Grassroots democracy has truly taken root, empowering local representatives to make decisions that directly impact their communities. The success of the Back to Village program and My Town My Pride initiative are testimonies to a participatory approach that places citizens at the heart of governance. Equally transformative has been the focus on infrastructure. The pace of construction of highways, tunnels, airports, and rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir is unprecedented. Projects like the Chenab Bridge—the world's highest railway bridge—and the expansion of Jammu and Srinagar airports symbolize connectivity and confidence. Improved road networks are not merely infrastructural feats; they represent lifelines of opportunity linking remote areas to mainstream development. Education, healthcare, and tourism have also received renewed attention. New medical colleges, upgraded hospitals, and initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat scheme have expanded healthcare access. Similarly, the introduction of PM Shri and Model Schools reflects a commitment to educational excellence. On the tourism front, the "New J&K" has witnessed record-breaking footfalls, reviving livelihoods and global interest in the Union Territory's breathtaking landscapes and cultural diversity. Crucially, the government's focus on investment and entrepreneurship has redefined economic prospects. The youth, once disillusioned, are now emerging as entrepreneurs, athletes, and innovators—proving that opportunity is the most powerful antidote to unrest. The tricolour flies proudly across every district, and national festivals are celebrated with enthusiasm—symbols of unity, integration, and optimism.

ISHER SINGH JASROTHIA

Universally Children's day was being celebrated on 20th November every year and thereafter before 1959, as decided by the UN General Assembly & sanctioned by 191 states across the world over. Subsequently universally linked with the rights of the children, the day 20th November was proposed with the birth anniversary of the Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, The First Prime Minister of Independent India. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru had great passion, love and affection for the children, hence the Children day was corroborated with the birth of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. The fact was that Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, was also called Chacha Nehru in the second decade and thereafter. When we recollect the memories in our school days time between 1954 - 1965 and thereafter, the children used to wear caps on their heads and called Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru as Chacha Nehru. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru enlightened the public about the importance of education, who was also Chairman of Planning Commission, inventor of Panch sheel, established friendly and bilateral relations with the foreign countries across the world over immediately after independence. A distinguishable, tremendous and unmatched personality, rendered services to the nation, cannot be obliterated from the history of India. He had the visionary spirit and mission for transformation of society into an egalitarian one. His recognition in terms of his statesmanship, autobiography, Panchsheel, Discoveries of India, visionary concept, aspirations, perception of peace and tranquility and equality of human being are worth commendable and a source of new light and inspiration for the modern generation. Before the pre-independence era, he followed the philosophy and ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi - a person known across the world over for non-violence, truthfulness - an ultimatum for realistic prevalence, the symbolic characteristic

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of whom is praiseworthy for his ambition of converting the knowledgeable society into egalitarian society. His conception of the education was that when there is no creative energy, the nation become weak in every respect, hence he emphasized great stress towards the education of the children whom he considered as the future of a nation and whose talents, expression, energies and contribution should be channeled for the betterment of society. He visualized that in addition to the academic education, the physical education of the children is equally important. In December 1929, under Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru leadership, the Indian National Congress at its Lahore Session resolved and declared 'Pooan Swaraj' complete independence to be the goal of the national movement. At the time of partition of India, with the help of the then Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel, hereinafter called the "Iron Man of India", he integrated the states falling within the jurisdiction of India, except Junagarh, Kashmir & Hyderabad had succeeded to Indian Union. Kashmir remained as problem and undecided for a longer time. When the Kashmir was invaded by the frontier tribesmen, Maharaja Hari Singh, made accession and signed an Instrument of Accession on 26th of October during the regime of Prime Ministership of Pt. Nehru. The Constitution of India came into force on 26th January 1950 in the form of India as Sovereign, Democratic Republic, the priorities of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru's were for friendly and bilateral relations with the countries, which became as one of widening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonality. India organized the Asian relations and chaired the International Control Commission in 1954. Under the dynamic leadership of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, India became the founder member of the non-aligned Movement and played an active

role in strengthening the movement and making it an effective voice in representing the collective aspirations and interests of the developing countries on the vital issues vis-a-vis peace and harmony. The significance of his dynamical leadership for strategic policy and maintaining good relationship with countries is commendable when China launched a sudden aggression over India in North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). India got sympathy and support from many countries like USA & UK for the interpretation of Panchsheel and ultimately China was compelled to declare unilateral ceasefire. His letters written from jail to his daughter Indira Gandhi (late PM of India), discern his perception, ideology, statesmanship, leadership qualities. His delivering the lecture continuously for hours together by which he intended to preach the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi in the mindset of Indian - the attainment of peace and tranquility, is praiseworthy. He had the passion and vision for non-violence and progress of the nation by enlightening the masses by way of educating them through elementary education and implementing the rural development programs. He had great aspiration for conversion of society into comprehensible modernization form. He had great passionate admiration for the children and it is a matter of delight and coincidence of both these events when we recollect the memory of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru on his birth anniversary on 14th of November; the children day falling on the same day. Like Mahatma Gandhi, and great leaders, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru had the passion of peace and harmony, advocated strong desire and conception of contemplation of children's mindset, insinuates the reality of egalitarian society - a society for attainment of equal rights. He had the perception that the wealth of the nation lies in generating faith, confidence and mindset of the children who realizes the reality of life. He had visual perception that

human suffering, misery, illiteracy; superstitions are root causes of poverty and backwardness of the nation. He pleaded for the richness of the nation through educating the youth and exploiting their disposition, energies and potentials. His priorities were towards the education of the children as he believed that the education is the basic factors for all round development of the children, they being tender heart, to be handled carefully by the parents and the teachers. Jawahar Lal Nehru Presidential address was a stirring call to action: "we have no open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule, and you, comrades, and all the countrymen and countrywomen are invited to join it". Nehru also made it known that in his view liberation did not mean only throwing off the foreign yoke: "I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes, or in an order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes on men than even the kings of old and whose methods are as predatory as those of old feudal aristocracy." He also spelt out the method of struggle: "Any great movement for liberation today most necessarily be a mass movement, and mass movements must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organized revolt.... And if the principal movement is a peaceful one, contemporaneous attempts at a sporadic violence can only distract attention and weaken it". Let us take pledge to commemorate the memories of these distinguished and eminent personalities by contemplating their deeds in the mindset of our new generation in the educational institutions and other associated establishments relating to the education so as to disseminate and give wide publicity to the heroic characteristics traits of these great persons. (The author is a Chairman of a CBSE school at Kathua)

Children's Day: More Than Celebration - A Commitment for future

A. IBRAHIM SHERIFF



Every year, 14th November is celebrated as Children's Day in India, commemorating the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a leader who cherished children and believed in nurturing them as the architects of India's future. On this joyful day, schools resound with laughter, parks fill with colour, and communities gather to celebrate the spirit of childhood. But amidst the festivities, there exists a silent, vigilant force 'one that works round the clock, not with balloons or sweets, but with courage and compassion' to protect the innocence of children in one of the busiest public spaces in the world i.e. the Indian Railways. We are talking about the Railway Protection Force (RPF), the unsung heroes who safeguard more than just passengers and railway property. "The children of today will make the India of tomorrow." Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru RPF protect dreams and they protect children. But in the corners of railway platforms, under staircases, in waiting rooms and on moving trains, are thousands of children who know nothing of this celebration. Children who are trafficked in broad daylight, unseen by rushing crowds, Children who have run away from abuse, only to fall into another trap, Children who are abandoned, lost, or coerced into child labour; their innocence stolen long before its time. For these forgotten faces, Children's Day is not a celebration, it is a plea for help. The group answering this call are men and women in khaki of the Railway Protection Force (RPF). RPF: Where Duty Meets Compassion While the RPF is known for its role in railway security, many are unaware of its pivotal contribution to child protection. Railway stations, often overcrowded and

chaotic, can become danger zones for children, places where they may get separated from families, fall prey to traffickers, or simply go unnoticed in distress. It is here, in these very spaces, that RPF personnel become lifelines, stepping in not just as law enforcers, but as guardians, mentors, and caregivers. The RPF: From Property Protectors to Child Rescuers: The RPF established in 1957, was originally mandated to safeguard railway property and further entrusted with the responsibility to ensure passenger security. But over the years, it has evolved into something more powerful, a lifeline for thousands of endangered children moving through India's massive railway system. Why the Railways? Because traffickers, child labour agents, and abductors prefer trains. They offer anonymity amid large crowds. They cross state lines quickly, complicating jurisdiction. They provide access to remote rural sources and large urban destinations of exploitation. The Indian Railways with over 67,000 km of track, 12,000 + trains and 7,000 stations is both a miracle of public transport and tragically, a corridor of vulnerability for children. That's where the RPF steps in as India's first line of defence against child trafficking, child labour, and exploitation on the rails. Operation Nanhe Farishte: Hope in Khaki The RPF's nationwide initiative, Operation Nanhe Farishte, is a shining example of child focused policing. In 2017, Indian Railways launched a transformative initiative under the RPF called Operation Nanhe Farishte - literally meaning "Little Angels". Its mission to rescue, rehabilitate and protect children in distress on railway premises. Since its inception, Operation Nanhe Farishte has rescued over 1.6 lakh children, including thousands trafficked for labour, marriage or abuse. Prevented untold numbers of potential child trafficking and child labour cases. Partnered with Childline (1098), District Child Protection Units, and NGOs for rehab-

ilitation. Created Child Help Desks at key stations - Child Help Desks: Small Booths with Big Hearts At major stations, Child Help Desks have become havens for vulnerable children. Operated jointly by RPF, police, 1098 and NGOs to offer- Immediate shelter, food, and medical care, Registration into child protection systems, Connection to Child Welfare Committees and legal aid and tracking of missing child complaints. Children rescued here are not just "handed over." They are cared for, comforted and heard. Thousands of RPF personnel trained in child rights, trauma care and soft skills in this context. But behind every number is a story, a life, a child with a name and a constable with a conscience. Children at Risk: Why the Indian Railways Is Ground Zero India is home to over 472 million children and a large number of them belong to economically and socially vulnerable families. In this environment, children fall prey to Trafficking for bonded labour in factories, eateries, construction sites and homes. Sexual exploitation including being sold into prostitution. Forced begging as part of organized rackets. Early and illegal marriages, especially of girls. Neglect and abandonment due to poverty, addiction or family conflict. The vast railway network becomes the route through which these illegal transitions take place and the RPF becomes the last hope for interception. On the frontlines, real life heroism by RPF include- Bangalore, 2022: A routine patrol on the Yesvantpur platform led to the rescue of 8 boys aged 10-14, who had been promised jobs at a garment factory. In truth, they were destined for bonded labour. Their freedom was restored before it was taken away. Kanpur, 2023: RPF personnel, trained to spot suspicious behavior, noticed an agitated 13-year-old girl with a man who claimed to be her uncle. A discreet inquiry and careful questioning revealed she was being trafficked for forced mar-

riage. She was rescued, the trafficker arrested and she is now in school under state care. Chennai Central, 2024: A crying 2-year old was found abandoned near the vending stalls. Constable Praveena, a young woman RPF officer, held the child for hours, fed him milk and helped locate his family through CCTV footage. She is now fondly called "Amma" by the boy's mother. These are not cinematic tales. These are everyday miracles, performed by ordinary people doing extraordinary work. Women RPF Personnel: Angels in Uniform Perhaps the most impactful change in child protection by RPF has come through its increasing number of women constables and officers. With their presence and empathy, children feel safer and more comfortable opening up. Young girls, especially victims of abuse, receive nurturing care. The RPF presents a more balanced, humane face to victims. These women are not only protectors but also they are sisters, mothers and counselors rolled into one. Whether it's a constable calming a lost child on a crowded platform or an Inspector chasing down a suspected trafficker, these daily acts of heroism have brought hope and safety/security to countless young lives. These stories rarely make it to primetime news, but they are testaments to the human spirit in uniform. Child Labour: A Crisis Hidden in the Open Even today, thousands of children are illegally employed, some as young as 8 years old. They are sweeping floors in stalls, stitching clothes in shops, washing utensils in trains/hotels, Breaking bricks in remote sites. They are often transported by trains, their fate sealed before they even know the meaning of "labour." The RPF in partnership with labour enforcement authorities and police has rescued thousands of these children and ensured legal action against exploiters. Beyond Rescue: Rehabilitation and Hope

Saving a child is only the first step. The RPF also ensures proper documentation and FIRs to prosecute traffickers, Medical and psychological support for trauma recovery, Family tracing and safe return where possible, Long-term rehabilitation through government schemes and NGOs. In many cases, RPF personnel maintain contact with rescued children, witnessing their transformation from victims to confident young individuals. The Silent War Against Child Trafficking In India, child trafficking is a shadow crisis, often unnoticed by the public. Traffickers target children from rural or poor families and transport them by train, betting on the anonymity of crowded compartments. But the RPF, with heightened vigilance, intelligence networks and tech support, has emerged as a first line of defense. Special anti-trafficking drives are conducted regularly at stations identified as trafficking hotspots. Traffickers often operate in silence, masking their victims under the guise of family or employment. The RPF has become adept at reading between the lines of lies and fear. RPF Anti-Trafficking actions include, Functioning of Anti Human trafficking Units (AHTUs) at identified railway stations, Deploying plainclothes officers on suspicious trains, Monitoring high-risk routes and border states, Using CCTV, facial recognition, and passenger analytics to identify patterns. Questioning passengers when a child's distress is visible even a tear is enough to intervene. In 2024 alone, over 9,000 children were rescued by RPF across India. Many were just hours away from being lost forever to factories, brothels, or criminal networks. Empowering the Protectors: Recognizing the importance of their role, the Ministry of Railways has invested in specialized child protection training for RPF personnel. Recruitment of more women constables, especially in sensitive zones, strengthening station infrastruc-

ture with CCTV, signage and awareness campaigns, enhanced coordination with District Child Welfare Officers and juvenile justice boards. The aim is clear to make Indian Railways not just a transport network, but a safe corridor for every child. The Children's Day Message, We Must All Hear It's easy to celebrate Children's Day with songs, balloons, and speeches. But the real tribute to children is ensuring their security, dignity, and future. Let us, this Children's Day- Acknowledge the unseen children in distress on our railway platforms. Salute the RPF warriors who are rescuing lives, not just property. Let's pledge to support and spread awareness of child rights and protection and encourage citizens to report suspicious cases by calling RPF Helpline 139 or Childline 1098. The Railway Tracks of Hope The Indian Railways may be built of steel, but it carries the dreams of India's children. While it moves people across the nation, the RPF ensures that no child is moved into danger. This Children's Day, let us remember- The childhood must never be lost in transit as long as the RPF is on duty, it won't be. Let the world celebrate the beauty of childhood. Let the RPF continue safeguarding it - one child, one rescue, one future at a time. The true strength of a nation is reflected in how it treats its most vulnerable. The RPF is not just a security force, it is a symbol of India's conscience in uniform. By guarding railway platforms, they are guarding childhood itself. Through its tireless rescue efforts, anti-trafficking operations and empathetic outreach, the RPF ensures that no child is invisible, and no cry goes unheard. The RPF steps in not just as security personnel, but as saviours. Let us recognize, support and honour their work - not just on Children's Day, but every day. (The writer is IRPFs, DIG-Cum-CSC, RPF/Southern Railway)

GST Reduction: Passing on the Benefits to Farmers'

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Agriculture is very crucial sector for the country's growth. With a contribution of about 17% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); the sector still is a source of livelihood to around 50 percent of the population. Since independence, successive governments have been working to strengthen this sector through various policies, programme and by enacting various legislations. Last decade has witnessed many pro farm initiatives which have not only augmented production but also mobilized and empowered farming community including youths and farm women. Every year the renewed focus of government on agriculture and allied sectors is manifested through the Budgetary allocation to these sectors. The focus of the government thus lies in welfare of farming communities, agripreneurs, various agro-based industries and all other stakeholders engaged in the upliftment of farming community. The government relies on various types of revenue for public spending. For this it levies various types of taxes (Direct as well as Indirect) as a means of revenue generation. An important indirect tax is the Goods and Services tax (GST) which has replaced many indirect taxes in the country such as excise duty, Value Added Tax (VAT), services tax etc.

After subsuming majority indirect taxes, GST is now the single domestic indirect tax law for the whole country. The GST Act was passed in the Parliament on March 29, 2017 and came into effect on July 0, 2017. It is widely seen as a tool to eliminate the cascading effect of taxes and to curb tax evasion as well as to increase the taxpayer's base. Recently, Government of India slashed the GST on various agricultural items. The GST which was previously as high as 18% was brought down to as low as 5%. It also has given a relief to industries that are agriculture related. A farmer now definitely is feeling relaxed from the burden of taxation. At the same time, the government's move to reduce the GST in agriculture speaks in volumes of how seriously it is concerned about promoting farmers' welfare and rural growth. The reform will not only cut costs for farmers but also help collective organizations like cooperatives and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organizations). Cheaper fertilizers and farm machines will raise productivity. Support for cold storage and food processing will reduce wastage and give farmers better returns. Dairy, honey and other allied activities will also become more profitable. These steps will make Indian farming stronger and more self-reliant, in line with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Lower GST on tractors and farm equipment will make mechanization more affordable for farmers. More mechanization means more efficiency and timeliness of operations leading to more productivity. Let us see how the GST reduction will help promote use of machinery in agriculture. The GST on tractors (below 1800 cc) has been reduced from 12% to 5%. This will lead to a decrease in the cost of tractors by 40,000 to 60,000 depending upon the horsepower of tractor. Similarly, power tillers will now cost rupees 11,000 less as a result of new GST rates. The biggest price drop is in case of harvester. Farmers can save up to rupee 1, 87, 500 by its purchase whereas straw reapers are now cheaper by rupees 21,875. GST on commercial goods vehicles (like trucks and delivery vans) has been reduced from 28% to 18%. GST on prepared and preserved vegetables, fruits, and nuts has been reduced from 12% to 5%. On farm machinery, the GST rate has been lowered from 12% to 5% for a range of machinery, including tractor parts like tyres, tubes, and hydraulic pumps, Sprinklers and drip irrigation systems, harvesting machinery, straw reapers and compost machines. The GST on Fixed Speed Diesel Engines of power not exceeding 15HP has also come down from 12% to 5%.

In Dairy sector, GST on Butter, Ghee and milking can has come down from 12% to 5%. Similarly, in aquaculture, GST on prepared/preserved fish has also come down from 12% to 5% enabling a more no. of people to consume this nutritious food. GST on bio-pesticides and micronutrients has also been reduced, which will benefit farmers. This will also increase their inclination towards bio-fertilizers from chemical fertilizers. Ammonia, Sulphuric acid and Nitric Acid constitute major inputs for fertilizer production. The GST on these inputs has been reduced from 18% to 5%. This will help reduce production costs, help companies avoid passing price hikes onto farmers, keeping fertilizers affordable and demand steady. It thus means ensuring timely availability of affordable fertilizers, directly aiding farmers during sowing seasons. GST on solar power-based devices has been reduced from 12% to 5% to lower irrigation costs. This means solar energy will now be available to the common masses at a more affordable price leading to lower upfront costs, and more and faster adoption of this renewable energy source. A 3 Kilo Watt rooftop system now costs around 10,000 less making it easier for the households to install. The price of an agriculture 5 HP solar pump

costing about 2.5 lakh has now come down by rupees 17,000. The GST on iron, steel, and aluminum milk cans has been reduced from 12% to 5%. Kendu leaves (Diospyros Melanoxylon) used for wrapping Bidis is a nationalized product like Bamboo and Sal seed. It is also one of the most important non wood forest products of states like Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Odisha. The GST rate on Kendu leaves has been cut from 18% to 5%. It positively impacts the supply chain especially for forest dependent communities by increasing their income security and making Bidi manufacturing cheaper. The reduction means a lower cost for Bidi manufacturers, potentially leading to higher margins for tribal rural families who are engaged in collection of Kendu leaves. The reductions in GST are intended to make mechanization more accessible, reduce costs of various items and equipments thereby helping farmer especially small and marginal ones to purchase them and bring efficiency and precision in their farming operations ultimately resulting in improved productivity. Farmers certainly find these items more affordable. They now have the choice to access modern machinery through ownership or in shared use with various collective organizations.