

NATIONAL SECURITY

The recent crackdown on an active terror module by security agencies marks yet another reminder of the persistent and evolving nature of threats facing the nation.

Terror modules seldom emerge in isolation. They are the culmination of coordinated radicalization, funding, recruitment, and logistical support-often rooted in cross-border networks that exploit local vulnerabilities.

The success of the crackdown must be credited to the synergy between various security agencies-intelligence units, counter-terrorism squads, state police forces, and central investigative bodies.

While operational success is commendable, it must be supported by long-term policy measures. Strengthening grassroots policing, promoting community intelligence, and addressing socio-economic fault lines that facilitate radicalisation are crucial steps.

At the same time, public awareness remains essential. Rumour-mongering, sensationalism, and political exploitation of such incidents only deepen divisions-ironically aiding extremist agendas.

Bihar's Verdict and the Emerging Grammar of Indian Politics

HARDEEP SINGH PURI

The people of Bihar have delivered a mandate whose weight goes well beyond the arithmetic of seats. The National Democratic Alliance has won 202 of the 243 seats in the Legislative Assembly.

For years, much of the commentary on Bihar treated the state as if it were frozen in time. Elections were read as exercises in caste arithmetic, with social demography assumed to translate mechanically into political outcomes.

Governance delivery has anchored this transformation. Over the last decade, Bihar has seen more than 55,000 kilometres of rural roads built or upgraded, linking villages to markets, schools and health centres.

ty through a combination of central schemes and state programmes. Under Saubhagya and related initiatives, over 35 lakh households in Bihar were electrified, taking the state close to universal household connectivity.

As these public goods spread, old labels lose some of their hold. Bihar's society remains diverse and layered, yet those layers no longer behave like watertight containers in electoral terms.

The verdict has also delivered a clear message on dynasty centred politics. Parties that relied on family charisma and inherited networks have seen their legislative space contract sharply.

The behaviour of younger voters sits at the heart of this shift. Bihar has one of

India's youngest demographic profiles, and millions of citizens born after 2000 voted in this election. They have grown up in an India where expressways, digital payments, competitive federalism and ambitious welfare schemes shape expectations.

This generation also brings a sharp instinct for national coherence. Young voters are alert to rhetoric that undermines institutions, flirts with separatist sentiment or trivialises national security.

Law and order provide another layer of explanation. Bihar's elections were once associated with booth capturing and violence. Over recent years, and especially in this electoral cycle, those images have largely receded.

The response of parts of the opposition to

these developments has been revealing. Rather than reflecting on the reasons for their loss of support, some leaders have preferred to cast doubt on the Election Commission, on voter lists or on the fairness of the process itself.

Placed in a wider national and global context, Bihar's verdict strengthens an emerging pattern. At a time when several democracies grapple with polarisation, economic drift and institutional fatigue, India continues to register high participation, stable leadership and a policy trajectory centred on growth, inclusion and national strength.

For the National Democratic Alliance, this mandate is both encouragement and instruction. It validates the emphasis on infrastructure, welfare delivery and security, yet it also raises expectations for faster job creation, deeper reforms and continual institutional improvement.

(The writer is Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas)

Labour Codes: Building a Future-Ready Workforce

A simplified, inclusive, and progressive framework to benefit employers, workers, gig economy participants, women employees, and society at large

MS. JYOTI VIJ

India stands at the cusp of a historic transformation in its economic and labour landscape. The consolidation of over 29 central labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes is not just a legislative exercise-it is a step towards building a labour ecosystem that is modern, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of a rapidly changing economy.

Labour reform has long been a pressing demand by the industry. With global supply chains integrating, technology disrupting industries, and new forms of employment emerging, India needs a framework that could both support business competitiveness and protect the rights and dignity of workers.

Benefits for Employers

For enterprises, particularly in a competitive global environment, the Labour Codes offer much-needed simplification. Multiple compliances and overlapping definitions have been replaced with a clear and unified system.

The reforms are especially significant for India's MSMEs and start-ups. By reducing compliance complexity and enabling single-

window clearances, the Codes empower smaller businesses to scale up quickly and participate more effectively in domestic and global markets. Importantly, provisions for fixed-term employment and modern dispute resolution provide businesses with the flexibility to grow and adapt without being hindered by procedural delays.

Equally significant is the decriminalisation of minor offences, which substitutes imprisonment with monetary fines for specific procedural infractions. This represents a progressive initiative to a more trust-based compliance environment, diminishes unnecessary litigation, and promotes a culture of self-regulation and collaboration between employers and regulators.

Benefits for Workers

For workers, the Codes reinforce the principle of fairness. The Code on Wages ensures universal minimum wages and timely payment of salaries, eliminating the possibility of arbitrary or delayed payments. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code strengthens workplace safety, mandates welfare facilities, and introduces periodic health check-ups.

tract between employers and employees, upholding the dignity of work.

Benefits for Gig and Platform Workers

Perhaps the most forward-looking provision is the formal recognition of gig and platform workers and aggregators. With nearly 8 million Indians engaged in the gig economy-a number expected to grow significantly in the coming decade-the Labour Codes provide a foundation for inclusive growth.

Benefits for Women Employees

The Codes are also a step forward in advancing gender equity in the workplace. They reaffirm the principle of equal pay for equal work, strengthen maternity benefits, and make provisions for crèche facilities. By easing restrictions on women's working hours-with necessary safeguards for safety and dignity-the Codes create opportunities for women to participate in sectors and shifts that were traditionally inaccessible.

Benefits for Other Stakeholders

Beyond employers and employees, the Labour Codes also bring benefits to MSMEs and start-ups by simplifying compliance and enabling growth, while giving government agencies a modern framework for transparent implementation.

A Shared Journey Ahead

The Labour Codes are not the end of the journey but the beginning of a new chapter. Their success will depend on smooth implementation, coordination across states, and active participation by all stakeholders.

(The author is the Director General, FICCI)

TB-Free Jammu & Kashmir: How NHM turned a national mission into a people's movement

SINDHIYA GUPTA



Jammu & Kashmir is quietly scripting one of India's strongest success stories in public health - a story of scale, resolve and relentless ground action.

At the heart of this transformation is the National Health Mission J&K, which has turned the country's TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan into a dynamic, door-to-door movement.

Under the leadership of Mission Director Baseer-ul-Haq Choudhary, the UT's fight against tuberculosis has moved far beyond official directives - it has become a collective mission touching every home, every village, and every high-altitude hamlet.

What sets J&K apart is not just the ambition of its TB elimination campaign, but its speed and reach.

Over the past two years, health teams have fanned out across the mountains and plains, into dense urban neighbourhoods, pastoral communities, and remote tribal settlements - places where health access has traditionally been a challenge.

The numbers speak for themselves, with over 5.25 lakh people screened in 2024-25, and another 2.59 lakh screened so far this year.

This aggressive push for early detection has been the turning point, allowing health workers to identify infections early, start treatment quickly, and stop the disease from spreading silently.

The backbone of this mission is a diagnostic system that has been strengthened like never before. District and sub-district hospitals now run high-speed CBNAAT and TrueNat machines.

Digital X-rays and portable diagnostic tools are reaching snow-bound pockets where healthcare delivery is often at the mercy of weather.

For perhaps the first time, geography is no longer a barrier to accurate TB diagnosis in J&K.

But technology alone doesn't win battles - people do. And the Nikshay ecosystem has emerged as a lifeline for thousands of TB patients across the UT.

Through Nikshay Mitras, patients are receiving nutritional support, counselling, and constant follow-up.

Financial support under Nikshay Poshan Yojana is reaching families on time, ensuring treatment never stops because of hunger or hardship.

And at the centre of this network stand ASHA workers - the unsung heroes walking miles each day to ensure every patient takes every dose, every time.

Their efforts are not just curing TB; they are preventing the rise of drug-resistant forms of the disease.

This massive campaign is being steered with strong administrative oversight.

Regular reviews by the Chief Secretary and the Lieutenant Governor have kept districts on their toes.

Under the guidance of the MD NHM, performance targets are clear, timelines are tight, and accountability is firm - resulting in one of the most coordinated TB elimination operations anywhere in the country.

Just as important is the growing social movement around TB awareness.

Health melas, school programmes, panchayat sabhas, religious gatherings, and high-impact social media outreach are reshaping public attitudes.

The message is clear and powerful: TB is preventable, curable, and nobody should fear testing. Breaking stigma is half the battle - and J&K is winning it by taking conversations directly to communities. The result is a TB elimination model that health experts are now looking at with admiration.

This is not just a story of disease control - it is a story of vision, courage, and a UT determined to defeat tuberculosis once and for all.

(The writer is an entrepreneur based in Jammu)

Alumni: The unsung pillars of educational excellence

MOHAMMAD HANIEF



Education has long held a sacred place in the social and cultural fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. For generations, it has symbolized hope, dignity, and empowerment. Yet, despite the region's proud intellectual traditions, the education system today struggles with uneven quality, outdated curricula, and weak connections between learning and livelihood.

Across the world, alumni are not seen merely as former students but as lifelong stakeholders in their institutions. Their experiences, achievements, and networks help maintain educational standards, improve infrastructure, and ensure that learning remains relevant to the real world.

international organizations. Their insights and experiences could contribute immensely to improving the educational climate of the region. But the absence of structured alumni relations means this vast pool of knowledge and goodwill remains untapped. Unlike in Delhi, Mumbai, or Bengaluru-where alumni networks are integral to institutional culture-most educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir lack formal mechanisms to engage their graduates in meaningful ways.

Alumni also embody the moral and intellectual

image of their institutions. The reputation of any educational system ultimately rests on the calibre of its graduates. When alumni succeed in their respective fields, they serve as ambassadors of the values and standards that shaped them. Their visibility in public life strengthens the institution's credibility and attracts new students, partnerships, and resources.

In many states, alumni participation has also become a crucial component of quality assurance. Accreditation agencies now encourage institutions to include alumni feedback in their evaluation processes, recognizing that former students can provide authentic insight into how effectively education prepared them for life.

Equally significant is the social dimension of alumni involvement. Education in Jammu and Kashmir must not only prepare individuals for employment but also nurture social responsibility and community service. Alumni-led initiatives-whether in supporting rural schools, sponsoring girl education, or promoting environmental awareness-can amplify this vision.

However, the path to building strong alumni

engagement is not without obstacles. Institutional inertia, weak coordination, and the absence of long-term strategy often limit progress. Most colleges lack dedicated alumni offices or databases to track their graduates. Associations, where they exist, are largely ceremonial-active only during annual events. To harness alumni potential effectively, institutions must institutionalize this relationship through structured programs, digital platforms, and consistent communication.

Alumni, for their part, must view engagement not as charity but as partnership. Their involvement is a way of investing back into the system that once invested in them. The government, too, has a role to play by encouraging policies that integrate alumni into institutional governance and policy-making.

Education in Jammu and Kashmir stands at a crossroads. The region's youth are capable, its teachers committed, and its institutions resilient. Yet the gap between potential and performance persists. Strengthening alumni involvement offers a pathway to bridge this gap-connecting experience with aspiration, and knowledge with opportunity.

Alumni are not just products of education-they are partners in its purpose. Their wisdom, networks, and contributions can breathe new life into Jammu and Kashmir's academic ecosystem. Engaging them meaningfully could help the region rebuild confidence in its institutions, raise educational standards, and inspire a new generation of learners to believe once again in the transformative power of education.