

TACKLING CLIMATE CHALLENGES

Climate change is no longer a distant warning whispered by scientists; it is a lived reality shaping daily life across the globe. India, with its vast geography, demographic weight, and expanding development ambitions, stands at a critical crossroads. The question before us is stark: Will we adapt swiftly and wisely, or will we allow environmental pressures to outpace our capacity to respond? The answer will define the nation's future for decades to come.

Extreme weather events-floods, droughts, heatwaves, cloudbursts, forest fires-now occur with unsettling regularity. The devastation in Himalayan regions, the heat stress in metropolitan cities, and the erratic monsoons affecting farmers reflect a simple truth: climate change is not a seasonal challenge; it is a structural one. Traditional development models, once seen as pathways to prosperity, must now be reimagined through the lens of sustainability and resilience.

The government has undertaken ambitious initiatives-from the Panchamrit commitments announced at COP26, to rapid solar energy expansion, to schemes promoting green mobility and rejuvenation of rivers. Yet policies alone cannot combat a crisis of such magnitude. Climate action must become a national ethic, a civic responsibility, and a cultural movement. The fight against climate change will be won not only through high-level policies but through everyday choices made by millions.

A stronger emphasis on climate literacy is essential. If young citizens internalise environmental responsibility early, India can cultivate a generation capable of innovating green solutions rather than inheriting ecological burdens. Educational institutions must treat climate studies not as optional modules but as foundational knowledge. While youth-driven climate activism is growing, it still requires institutional support and mainstream recognition.

Equally important is empowering local communities. From Ladakh to Kerala, indigenous knowledge holds valuable insights into water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem management. These traditions, honed over centuries, must be integrated into modern policy frameworks. Climate solutions cannot be imported wholesale-they must resonate with India's geography, culture, and socio-economic diversities.

The global green economy is estimated to be worth trillions of dollars; India must position itself not as a follower but as a frontrunner. While many industries have adopted ESG frameworks, implementation remains uneven. India needs stricter monitoring of emissions, greater transparency, and incentives that reward genuine sustainability. Greenwashing must give way to green action. Above all, climate action requires political will that transcends electoral cycles. The environment cannot wait five years for a new mandate. It demands continuity, cooperation, and courage-qualities that must unite policymakers.

A National Resolve: Whole of Government and Society Driving Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat

■ ANN PURNA DEVI



In a nation where women and children form the foundation of over a billion lives, their empowerment is not just a policy choice-it is the path to Bharat's destiny. Under Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary governance, Bharat is experiencing a historic transformation that combines global ambition with human-centric progress. The story of New India is being shaped not only through economic milestones and global presence, but in the classrooms where young minds grow, the Anganwadi centres that nurture our children, and the homes where aspirations take root.

The Prime Minister's unwavering commitment to 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' has become a guiding force for the Ministry of Women and Child Development anchoring our collective mission for Viksit Bharat@2047. A significant step in this journey has been the launch of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on 27th November last year.

With our bold and unwavering vision, we have reaffirmed our national commitment to end child marriage by 2030, so that every girl and boy can grow up safe, continue their education, and shape their future with pride and confidence. From the very beginning, we embraced a 'Whole of Government and Whole of Society' approach, recognizing that this challenge cannot be overcome through policy alone. It requires a collective strength - families, communities, frontline workers, institutions and the government standing shoulder to shoulder to break a centuries-old practice and protect the aspirations of every child. As a powerful reflection of our shared resolve, crores of people in villages and towns have come forward to take pledge to end child marriage.

'Whole of Government' Comes Together for a Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat

Child marriage is one of the most deeply embedded challenges our nation has inherited over generations. It often takes hold in communities facing limited access to education, resources, and awareness. These gaps-created by scarcity and unequal opportunity-have enabled the practice to persist, restricting countless children from realising the futures they deserve.

Today, that reality is transforming-decisively and for the better. Under the Modi Government, we are addressing the very roots that once nurtured this practice. With clear policy direction, well-designed schemes, and the renewed trust of communities in governance, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is at the forefront, dismantling the conditions that had enabled child marriage to persist. The progress we are witnessing is deliberate and determined, shaped by a governance model that places women and children at the heart of national development.

Our initiatives are designed to address root causes of vulnerability. We are committed to ensuring that every entitlement reaches the last mile-touching the life of the most vulnerable child in the remotest village and hamlet of our nation. Each intervention is crafted to handhold women and children through every stage of risk, ensuring that from the unborn child to the adolescent girl, every stage of life is safeguarded, prioritised, and empowered.

From Poshan Tracker and Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and from the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Programme to the PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme, every initiative serves as a protective shield and a pathway towards a safe, dignified and equitable future for every child.

Leveraging technology as a catalyst for inclusion, The Poshan Tracker -Ministry's flagship digital platform-seamlessly connects 14 lakh Anganwadicentres with lactating mothers, children under six and adolescent girls. It has already created a robust safety net for more than 10.14 crore beneficiaries across the country. Complementing this digital enablement, Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi stands

as a transformative early childhood care and education initiative, ensuring that every pre-primary child receives holistic, high-quality early stimulation that builds the foundation for lifelong learning.

Our policies reflect not only intent but action. By anchoring reforms in real, sustained budgetary commitments and targeted investments, the Modi Government has made it unequivocally clear that protecting our children-particularly from vulnerabilities like child marriage-remains a national priority. The National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Programme, with an allocation of Rs 1,827 crore for 2025-26 alone, ensures that no child drops out of school due to poverty, one of the most persistent drivers of child marriage. Meanwhile, the PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme provides crucial financial support to young women pursuing higher education.

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana has further strengthened this safety net by equipping young people with industry-relevant skills and providing them financial incentives and recognised government certification. Similarly, PM-DAKSH scheme empowers marginalised communities, especially SC, OBC and EWS youth who remain most vulnerable to child marriage. By equipping them with skills and opportunities, we are creating pathways for enriched, independent lives and setting a new precedent for generations to come.

The Impact: Closer to Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat

A few years ago, the idea of ending child marriage would have seemed distant, even unrealistic. But India has proved otherwise. Through clear policies, sustained action, focused grassroots efforts and measurable progress, we have challenged that belief and shown that change is not only possible but already underway.

This unprecedented shift is the outcome of thousands of small and big determined efforts. Our Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) have emerged as the backbone of this mission. In the past year alone, we have strengthened our frontline by

appointing more than 37,000 CMPOs across the country. By equipping Anganwadi workers, empowering panchayats and strengthening district administrations with knowledge of child protection laws, we are ensuring that even the most marginalised families are linked to government schemes, children are brought back to school, and communities are made aware of the grave violation that child marriage represents.

So far, we have identified over 6,30,000 out-of-school girls and re-enrolled them in classrooms.

From silence to reporting, from stigma to support-India is choosing Change. Today, we are leveraging the latest technological advancements to address this with greater precision, transparency, and impact. The Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat portal embodies this progress-a publicly accessible, centralised platform that brings together information on Child Marriage Prohibition Officers across the nation, provides an effective mechanism for reporting cases, and strengthens awareness among stakeholders and citizens.

For the first time, the dream of a child-marriage-free India has evolved into a unified national mission. Every arm of the Government of India and every segment of society is moving together with shared purpose and determination. Guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, we are not only protecting our children today but also laying the strong, confident and empowered foundations of Viksit Bharat. As India approaches a decisive tipping point in its collective fight against child marriage, we offer the world a new model of how governance and community can work together to protect every child and end the global menace of child marriage with urgency and certainty. After all, these children are the torchbearers and the true 'Sarathi' of Viksit Bharat we all aspire to build.

(The author is the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India)

The new face of Entrepreneurship in J&K: Rising against all odds

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



Entrepreneurship in Jammu & Kashmir is undergoing a quiet yet remarkable transformation, reshaping the economic landscape and expanding the imagination of what the region's youth can achieve. Once dominated by aspirations of government employment and traditional livelihoods, the economic narrative is now being rewritten by determined young individuals eager to build their own ventures. This shift, however, is not the result of ideal conditions-it is emerging despite persistent challenges and structural barriers that continue to test the resolve of new entrepreneurs.

The past few years have witnessed a welcome rise in enterprise-led thinking. Improved connectivity, targeted government schemes, and wider market exposure have opened new possibilities. E-commerce has enabled local products-from handiercrafts to gourmet foods-to reach customers across India and beyond. Increased digital literacy has also helped young people explore new ideas and build relevant skills. Yet these opportunities coexist with a series of ground realities that often make entrepreneurial journeys far more demanding in J&K compared to many other parts of the country.

A major difficulty lies in the unpredictability of the region's business environment. Frequent disruptions-whether due to weather, road blockades, communication issues, or political sensitivities-can halt operations abruptly, affecting supply chains and customer commitments. Entrepreneurs working with perishable goods,



transport-based services, or tourism bear the brunt of these uncertainties. The absence of a stable operational rhythm often discourages investors and limits long-term planning.

High logistics and transportation costs remain another formidable barrier. For many businesses, raw materials must be shipped from outside the region, pushing up input expenses. Meanwhile, sending finished goods to outside markets can be equally expensive, eroding profit margins. This imbalance is especially challenging for startups still trying to achieve scale. For entrepreneurs dealing in handiercrafts or agricultural products, transportation delays can lead to missed orders, damaged goods, and reduced competitiveness.

Infrastructural bottlenecks also continue to impede growth. While internet connectivity has improved overall, many areas still experience inconsistent speeds or sudden breakdowns. These disruptions affect online stores, digital payments, remote services, and social media marketing-now essential tools for modern businesses. Similarly, inadequate warehousing facilities, limited cold-storage units, and insufficient packaging standards restrict the ability of entrepreneurs to expand into larger markets.

Another ground-level difficulty is the complexity of navigating official processes. Despite progress, many entrepreneurs still struggle with licensing procedures, approvals, tax registrations, and compliance requirements. For a first-

time entrepreneur, especially one from a rural or semi-urban background, these processes can feel overwhelming. Lack of guidance at crucial stages often leads to delays, errors, or abandonment of promising ideas. Additionally, many schemes meant to support entrepreneurs remain underutilized due to insufficient awareness or procedural hurdles.

Access to finance is improving, but challenges persist. While small loans and subsidy-based programs exist, funding often remains difficult for ventures lacking collateral, credit history, or a clear guarantor. Many young entrepreneurs depend on personal savings or family support to begin their ventures, which restricts scale and increases financial vulnerability. Delayed loan approvals, high interest rates on certain credit lines, and lengthy documentation processes add further strain.

The region also faces a scarcity of skilled labour, particularly in specialized fields such as digital marketing, advanced manufacturing, product design, and hospitality management. Startups frequently report difficulty in hiring competent staff, which affects professionalism, service quality, and operational efficiency. For many, training employees becomes an additional cost and responsibility.

Market linkages, though improving, remain limited for sectors like handiercrafts, agribusiness, and tourism. Entrepreneurs often struggle to secure long-term buyers, institutional contracts, or partnerships with established brands. The absence of large-scale industries means fewer opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, or supply-chain integration-factors that can accelerate growth in other regions.

Women entrepreneurs, despite their commendable rise, face unique challenges. Many operate

from home due to mobility constraints or cultural expectations, which limits visibility and networking opportunities. Access to capital, digital training, and market exposure remains uneven. Yet, despite these barriers, women-led ventures continue to grow steadily, driven by determination and community support.

Against this backdrop, the resilience demonstrated by young entrepreneurs in Jammu & Kashmir is extraordinary. Their persistence reflects not only creativity and ambition but also a deeper desire to transform their communities. Many ventures prioritise social impact-supporting local artisans, promoting sustainable agriculture, preserving cultural heritage, or generating rural employment. This community-centred mindset has gradually shifted perceptions, encouraging families to support entrepreneurial risk-taking more than before.

The rise of cafés, boutique homestays, cloud kitchens, digital agencies, agribusiness ventures, and service-based startups shows that innovation is thriving in the region. Yet the real story lies in the perseverance behind these successes-the ability to survive disruptions, handle inconsistent infrastructure, absorb financial setbacks, and navigate a complex administrative landscape.

As J&K progresses along its developmental trajectory, entrepreneurship remains one of its strongest pillars for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. With improved infrastructure, consistent digital connectivity, easier market access, and more responsive support systems, the region has the potential to unlock even greater entrepreneurial energy. Until then, the quiet determination of its youth continues to redefine possibility-proving that growth is achievable even in challenging terrains.

(The author is a senior analyst)

Digital technology: Addiction or compulsion

■ SHYAM SUDAN

There is a slight line of demarcation between the uses of digital technology and its compulsion in this artificial intelligence era. It is very difficult for its user to identify whether they are using it on compulsion mode or they become addicted to it. With the advancement in technology everything has changed in life of people. Smart phones and other digital devices has drastically change the life style and habits of our youngsters. Once there was a time when young generation generally prefer outdoor games in their life. Because there was no source of recreational activities in homes for the young generation. Now a days with the introduction of digital devices Le Smart phones and laptops, there are lot of entertaining facilities available for our youths in their homes. Generally youths of today prefer indoor recreational activities than outdoor games and sports. In our digital platforms there are plenty of games available for our youths. Some games are available only for recreation and enjoyment. But ,many money minting games are also available for us .There are several money making games like teen patti, colour prediction game ,dream eleven etc available for every age of people. Every year people waste a great percentage of money and time with the addiction of these games .However, these games are not totally fraud and deceive people. But the terms and conditions of these games are designed in such a way that only few get the chance for winning. In the greed of money people generally falls in the prey of this



nexus of money game .The interesting fact of these games is that we can participate in these games with very meager investment. This trapping design of these digital game generally attract every individual towards them. Even the common man with limited expenditure can play these games .But there are very limited and

almost negligible chances for all to get the benefit in these games. However there is no specific art or talent to win in these games. Only your destiny and luck decide the condition for you. There are millions of users of these games in our country. In the hope of slum dog millionaire generally people waste their precious money and

time .Bitter reality of this side is that the designer of these games earn millions of rupees in a single night. How much tax they are paying to the government or licensing agency , nobody knows. We can say that it is kind of licensed gambling.

Other bitter side of this culture is that it promotes addiction in the minds of our youths. Now

a days we have seen that incidences of crimes are increasing in our society. Mostly our young generation is suffering from the problems of frustration, anxiety and intolerance. Failure in these games is one of the reason responsible for these negative aspects among youths. At one side we generally give message to our youths that gambling is a bad habit. Even we quoted the example of Mahabharata to motivate our children. On the other side we are giving license for these kind of obnoxious culture.

The other harmful effects of this culture is that it effects the eyesight of its users. Because people generally children sit for hours and constantly use digital devices. Children generally avoid the culture of playing outdoor games .Due to this inactiveness and lethargic attitude they suffer in life .There is an urgent need to make a curb on this culture. Proper guidance and awareness is mandatory for our young generation in this direction. There is a common saying that there is no short cut in life to get the success. Then why our youngsters are adopting this alternative method for success. Proper guidance and counselling of youngsters is needed in this direction. However if we judiciously use the digital technology for our comfort and welfare of society, we can change its meaning .But it's addiction can lead to various complications in our life , especially in the minds of our young generation. Because they are falling in the trap of this technology on addiction mode only .There is an urgent need to give awareness to our young generation in this direction.