

## NATIONALISM IS PARAMOUNT

Nationalism is a concept in which the nation is supreme i.e. the nation is given the highest priority. It is an ideology that promotes a common identity among the citizens of any country. For the progress and prosperity of any nation, it is necessary to strengthen the sense of pride among the citizens for the nation by rising above the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and nationalism plays an important role in this. The feeling of nationalism is paramount among the Indian citizens and that is why when the citizens here are expected to respect the national flag and national anthem of the country, which are the national symbols of unity and integrity of the country, then they openly and with complete unity do so. Express your respect for everyone.

## Busting Exam Stress: Balancing Physical Health and Mental Well-being of Students

■ DHARMENDRA PRADHAN



Students often face a formidable challenge to strike a delicate balance between achieving academic excellence and maintaining physical and mental health in a fiercely competitive environment. This balance becomes particularly vital during exam periods when students face academic pressure and performance anxiety, deeply impacting their mental health and overall well-being. Exam preparedness is, no doubt, important. But much more important is to maintain a reasonably good balance between study and a healthy life.

Today, exam 'performance' remains so central to the students' over all mental make-up that they do not see anything beyond academic results. This overbearing notion consumes our students and stifles their creativity and talent. We all know far too well that every child is uniquely endowed and all cannot excel academically. Through the prism of exam result, we cannot possibly fathom the talent of a child. Exam results must not be the only barometer of the success in a student's life. All of us - parents, teachers, friends and family - should work in tandem and together to provide the child with a congenial environment to realise his full potential. Exam performance is not only contingent on innate talent but also on several things such as healthy body and agile mind that enhances the physical endurance and sharpen the cerebral focus.

Students bear the burden of expectations of the family, teachers, and society, to excel academically. This leads to an unenviable situation that makes them mentally vulnerable and physically draining. At times, with fatigue, their energy gets sapped and it takes toll on their health and well-being. Excessive stress has been construed to be a factor increasing the risk of mental health problems like anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. Nurturing mental well-being is, therefore, imperative. To overcome these challenges, students should remain ever positive, embrace exercise, meditation and deep-breathing to enhance the level of concentration and focus on their studies, establish a well-organized study routine, break down tasks into manageable chunks, and set realistic academic goals to achieve. Providing access to counselling services and open communication about mental health also create a supportive environment for those grappling with anxiety or other mental health concerns.

It would be edifying to note the following comprehensive ways as to how students' physical health and mental well-being can be maintained during exams:

**Small Breaks and Physical Activity:** Physical health is one of the fundamental elements in maintaining our overall fitness and agility. Regular exercise not only improves the cardiovascular health but also serves as a stress-buster. It enhances cognitive function, and the ability to recall information, both of which are crucial to enhance exam performance. While preparing for the exams, students invariably attach priority to their studies over their health. We should encourage them to incorporate some sort of physical activities like stretching, walking, jogging, or yoga that can significantly alleviate stress, helping students recharge their minds.

**Balanced Diet and Nutrition:** Nutrition plays a crucial role in dealing with the demands of rigorous study and staying healthy. Food is a fuel that nourishes both our body and mind. The quality of food that we eat significantly determines our overall health and mental well-being. A common mistake that students often make during this crucial period is to eat poorly or take unhealthy food such as junk fast food, chocolates, energy drinks and chips in place of nutritious home-made food. Sometimes they also skip meals during exams because of anxiety and stress or to save their time for exam preparation. Eating a balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre provides the necessary fuel for optimal brain function. Adequate hydration is often overlooked but is equally important, as lack of it can substantially impair cognitive abilities and concentration.

**Adequate Sleep for Good Health:** Quality sleep is equally vital during exam time. There is a direct correlation between sleep and cognitive function, memory retention, and emotional resilience. Students should maintain consistent sleep patterns by going to bed and waking up at the same time, each day. Students who take proper amount of sleep at night are always able to recall better and perform better. Good sleep is also an irreducible minimum for good health.

**Supportive and Encouraging Environment:** We should create a conducive environment where students can discuss their concerns and seek support from their parents and teachers. Providing access to counselling services for dealing with stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges should remain a top institutional priority. We should encourage open communication about the pressures of exams and deal with it effectively without getting psychologically entangled.

**Exercise and Meditation Practices:** Meditation can be a secret weapon to manage exam stress effectively. Students should practise techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga which can help calm the mind, improve concentration and reduce anxiety. These practices can help alleviate stress and enhance mental well-being.

**Time Management:** Students should adopt strategies to manage study timings to reduce last minute rush. We all know, how the screen time for the students has gone up due to excessive dependence on electronic medium. We understand that in the present time, electronic medium has become a necessity. But, our students need to strike a balance. Perhaps a digital detox will be essential to free some quality time for exam preparation.

In conclusion, nurturing students' physical health and mental well-being during exams is integral to their overall success. Taking care of students' well-being enhances their academic performance. It prepares them for the challenges they may face beyond the exam hall. We call upon the students to prioritize health and follow a regimen of physical exercise and meditation, digital detox, mental well-being, quality sleep and a healthy diet, besides effective time management strategy. By effectively handling the exam stress, our young students will perform to their potential and emerge as confident and forward-looking youth committed to realising the goals of Vikasit Bharat @2047.

(The Author is the Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Government of India).

# The Pandemic Pioneers: Anesthesiologists Navigating Through Pandemic With Grace

■ DR SHRUTI SHARMA



In the battle against the global pandemics that the world has faced over the last few centuries, and COVID-19 being the most recent one, there have been countless frontline heroes who, with their untiring efforts, made a difference in the lives of many. Anesthesiologists, being in the spotlight, brought their specialized skills, critical care expertise, and adaptability to the forefront. They not only played the role of airway experts, respiratory physicians, or intensivists but also stood up to assume leadership roles in an unknown, unclear scenario of global crisis, apart from practicing their conventional roles as perioperative physicians. Their roles extended far beyond the operating rooms that were vital for effective pandemic response and patient care.

## CRUCIAL ROLE OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS DURING THE PANDEMIC:

On Frontline of Critical Care: As the COVID-19 cases surged, anesthesiologists became the front-line warriors in intensive care units. Being the ones at the emergency rooms, they witnessed infected patients who desperately needed medical help at that crucial hour. They were seen intubating patients, maintaining their oxygenation and ensuring the patients' safe transport within and outside hospitals. Their expertise in airway management played a pivotal role in handling severe respiratory distress and played a crucial role in improving patient outcomes.

## Management of Ventilation and administration of Anesthesia:

The respiratory complications associated with the infection required advanced respiratory support including mechanical ventilation. With ever-changing patient parameters and their oxygen requirements varying with every passing moment, it was important for them to keep a constant check on the patients' vitals and also to perform their monitoring, utilizing their expert acumen. Anesthesiologists nurtured their skills to optimize oxygenation and to logically manage ventilator settings to deliver optimal patient outcomes. They also played a momentous role in the administration of anesthesia during the pandemic, as it



required a detailed risk evaluation and planning, for its execution.

## Pain Management, Procedural Sedation and Interventions:

Anesthesiologists were the ones who were involved in providing procedural sedation for various medical interventions, including those required for pandemic-related illnesses. All this needed precisely calculated doses of drugs and medications which would make the procedure run smoothly and, at the same time, would be absolutely safe for the already compromised COVID-19 patient. Another aspect where they meticulously employed their skills, was managing acute and chronic pain in COVID patients. The drugs to be administered to the patient, had to be precisely weighed as per their safety profile, pharmacology, metabolism, their interaction with the already prescribed drugs. It also required an elaborate assessment of the patient's clinical status.

## Challenges Encountered by Anesthesiologists during the pandemic:

### Adapting to changing roles and protocols:

Anesthesiologists had to quickly adapt to ever-changing and evolving treatment protocols, practice them at ground zero with utmost commitment, and ensure that their skills were utilized where they were most needed. Further recalling those treatment modalities at that very juncture and applying them practically at such high-pressure situations was indeed incredible and astounding.

## Resource Management Challenges and Solutions:

The pandemic brought forth unprecedented challenges in resource management as it led to a shortage of essential medical supplies and equipment. As the surge in patients requiring intensive care increased, their expertise in resource allocation became vital in optimizing outcomes. Their active involvement in implementing the resource protocols and expertise in pharmacology to manage drugs and medications proved crucial to evolving newer treatment strategies.

## Collaboration and Teamwork:

Anesthesiologists collaborated closely with other healthcare experts, including intensivists, respiratory therapists, pulmonologists, and nurses within and across the globe. This multidisciplinary approach ensured a comprehensive and coordinated ability to work in tandem with other specialties. This probably proved to be the key factor in the overall success of pandemic management.

## Training and educating the world:

Anesthesiologists deliberated their efforts to educate all first-contact health care professionals, as well as the people in the community, regarding the treatment protocols to follow and basic life support training and guided them to efficiently handle the challenges posed by the pandemic at the hospital as well as at their homes. They actively contributed to scientific literature, sharing insights, research findings, and best practices related to the management of COVID-19 that proved beneficial in saving numerous precious lives.

## Exploring telemedicine healthcare plat-

## form:

The pandemic prompted a rapid evolution in health care delivery with telemedicine emerging as a crucial tool. The anesthesiologists provided virtual consultations to the patients, monitoring and treating them across the globe, when it was arduous to reach out for any professional help.

## Mental Health Advocates and Emotional Toll:

The toll of the pandemic extended beyond physical health, affecting the mental well-being of both patients as well as health care providers. Anesthesiologists witnessing that pain and suffering emerged as advocates for mental health support for the world. The constant exposure to critically ill patients, the emotional burden of witnessing the patients' sufferings, and the fear of personal exposure to the virus and infecting one's own family while treating others created a unique challenge for these pandemic heroes, not letting go in those trying times. They became the patients' counselors, advisors, guides, healers, sympathizers, and even family when there was no one but them to depend upon.

## Looking Forward:

The Anesthesiologists emerged as sentinels of endurance, redefining their roles in the healthcare system and contributing completely to COVID-19 response efforts. In the aftermath of this pandemic, they have left behind a remarkable impression of being an indispensable part of our healthcare system, emphasizing preparedness for future crises, improved telehealth integration, and enhanced infection control measures.

## CONCLUSION:

In the face of unprecedented challenges, these born leaders have not just navigated through the storm; they have also emerged as beacons of resilience, compassion, and unwavering commitment toward patient care. As we applaud their tireless efforts, let their legacy inspire a future where healthcare leadership is defined by courage, innovation, and dedication toward healing. In the chapters beyond this pandemic, may the indomitable spirit of our PANDEMIC PIONEERS, the Anesthesiologists, continue to illuminate the path toward a much brighter, happier, and healthier world.

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# Bihar politics revolves around CM Nitish Kumar

■ ER. PRABHAT KISHORE

On 15th August 2021, India created history with its 75th anniversary of independence "Amrit Mahotsava". Another history has been created in Bihar, where Chief Minister Nitish Kumar completed 5474 days in power surpassing the earlier record of Sri Krishna Singh, the first CM of Bihar. Since more than one & half decades, the politics in Bihar is revolving around Nitish Kumar. In the Vidhan Sabha election 2020, Bihar has once again decided to march forward under his leadership. The NDA, lead by him, has returned to power securing 125 seats out of 243 and he became CM for the record 7th time.

Nitish Kumar, who hails from Kurmi Kisan family of Kalyanbigha in Harnaut (Nalanda), has started his political journey in 1974; when the student movement led by Jai Prakash Narayan was evolved. Then studying in Bihar College of Engineering (now NIT) at Patna, he fully devoted himself to the revolution. He was detained under MISA in 1974 and during emergency in 1975. In 1977, he contested the Vidhan Sabha election from Harnaut constituency against veteran Socialist Party leader Bhola Prasad Singh, but could not succeed. He again lost the 1980 election to Arun Singh, who had been wrongly acquitted in the Belhithi massacre. In the 8th Lok Sabha election 1984, Sri Dharamvir Singh, veteran Congress leader and ex-minister in the Indira Gandhi Government lost to an incumbent of Congress (I) in the sympathy wave after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. There was great resentment in public due to the defeat of Dharamvir Babu in Harnaut & Chandi segments. Nitish has campaigned for him in the Lok Sabha election. This helped Nitish to get elected to the Vidhan Sabha in 1985 in his third attempt, after which his political graph boomed sharply.

He was appointed as the President of the Yuva Lok Dal in 1987 and the secretary general of the newly formed Janata Dal in 1989. In 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999 he was elected to Lok Sabha from Barh Constituency and in 2004 from Nalanda constituency. In the Central government, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he served as Minister of State (Agriculture) in 1990, Cabinet minister (Railway) in 1998, surface transport minister in 1999, agriculture minister in 1999 and Railway minister in 2001.

Nitish was the man, who influenced legislatures to elect Laloo as the leader of the legislature party after the demise of Karpoori Thakur, ex-CM and as CM when he Janata Dal came to power in 1990. He was famous as "Chanakya" of Bihar politics. Nitish and Laloo both were termed as the right & left arms of Devi Lal in Bihar; but when the Mandal commission report was implemented, they supported V.P. Singh.

Janata Dal had come to power on certain promises to the people. Nitish presented various project works to State government for implementation, but now they were no longer Laloo's priority. He sidelined the suggestions and started making loose comment about him.

Nitish Kumar was gradually cornered and it became unbearable to survive with Laloo. The aggressive rally of Kurmi Samaj and Lav-Kush Sammelan in 1994 was the sign of resentment among non-Yadav sections of the society against the regime. Nitish joined the rally in late hour and recognized that opportune time had come to fight. Voices were also raised from other small artisan & landless communities for their upliftment and power sharing.

The Samata Party was formed in 1994 under the leadership of veteran socialist George Fernandes. Nitish Kumar was projected as CM candidate in the 1995 election, but the Party flopped. After due deliberations, the BJP-Samata Party alliance came into existence and its positive impact was seen in the coming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. In the 2000 election, no Party got an absolute majority and Nitish was appointed CM by the then Governor. But he did not succeed to gather majority support from the MLAs and resigned. After the fall of the NDA government led by Vajpayee in 2004, he fully devoted himself to Bihar and led several "Yatra" against the misrule of State govt. In the November 2005 election, the NDA got full majority under his leadership and he took oath as CM. Since then he is the CM, except 278 days of his nominee successor Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Nitish Kumar kept himself away from casteism and family coterie. He marched forward with balanced social engineering to keep the all community as against "MY" combination of RJD and "Upper caste" of Congress, BJP or Communists. He always preferred other castes in the Bureaucracy as well as in the Party, even at the cost of the genuine rights of his own castemen. Earlier senior most IAS officers K.D. Sinha and others have not been made Chief Secretary because they belong to his caste. IPS officer Ashish Ranjan Sinha stepped down from DGP due to same reason. Despite being the backbone of the Party, his castemen never got due share in candidature of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Vidhan Sabha or Vidhan Parishad and on ministerial berths. Extremely backward castes, comprising about 30% of the population, backward Pasmanda Muslims, Mahadalits and women have always been his top priority. In 2020 Bihar Election actually the political war was not "NDA vs MG" but was "Nitish vs All" and these depressed sections of the society, called "Silent Voters" stood firmly behind Nitish in the arena, even when BJP's core upper caste voters betrayed him.

Since the early days of his political life, Nitish has ambition to do welfare works, if got power. When he took the charge of CM, the situation in all sectors was alarming. He prioritized his works for good governance. To tackle law & order situation, fast track courts were set up and criminals had to go behind the bars. He gave impetus to the development and re-orient infrastructure sector activities in all corners of the State. Roads, bridges, bypasses, schools/colleges/hospitals/police stations/panchayat buildings were built and maintained.

In education sector, the Drop out rate in schools, particularly of girls, was very high. Various schemes such as Mukhyamantri Cycle Yojana/Poshak Yojana/Kishori Swasthya Karyakram were launched to attract the boys & girls. Primary school within 1 KM radius, upper primary school in 3 KM radius of the village and high school in every panchayat have been opened. In the higher secondary sector, inter classes were detached from colleges and attached to high schools, for the convenience of the rural masses. Engineering/Medical/ITI institutions have been opened in backwards areas. To meet financial crisis for higher education, Student Credit Card scheme for soft loan upto Rs 4 lakh have been launched. Before 2005, uninterrupted power supply to people, even in urban areas, was a dream. Its production as well as distribution were planned and now there is sufficient electricity available to the people.

Gender empowerment and strengthening have been an ambitious goal of Nitish. Apart from Poshak & Cycle Yojana in schools, 50 % reservation in Panchayats and Local bodies and 35% reservation in government jobs for women, Mukhyamantri Kanya Uththan Yojana for phase wise development of girls, Jeevika programme for rural women have been implemented.

On the tune of "Sapt Kranti" vision during JP movement, he planned 7-point programme, called "Saat-Nischay" for the all-round development of the State. The Saat-Nischay includes (1) Aarthik Hal Yuvaon Ko Bal for financially helping students & youths to become self-reliant, (2) Aarakshit Rojgar Mahilaon Ka Adhikar through reservation for female in jobs as well as Panchayat & local bodies, (3) Har Ghar Bijli, (4) Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal, (5) Har Ghar Tak Pakki Gali-Naliyan, (6) Gharon Mein Shauchalay Nirman, (7) Awsar Badhe Aage Padhe by opening Technical/Medical/Nursing/Polytechnic/ITI/P ara Medical institutes in every districts.

The positive face of Nitish is that his priority is not only government welfare schemes. His start-ups in the social sectors are more praise-worthy. The public campaign against age-old social evils such as Child marriage, Dowry System and Alcoholism is unique, as these issues are not said to be vote pulling agenda for politicians. Jal-Jiwan-Hariyali scheme for water conservation is also an ambitious mission. The ban on alcoholism has reduced domestic violence to a great extent. The Sharab Mafias are campaigning aggressively against Nitish and under their pressure a lobby comprising of opposition as well as some BJP leaders are opposing the ban in the name of revenue collection.

Although a lot of works have been done or are in progress, there is still a lot to be done. A generation has changed in past 20-30 years and they have not faced the worst prevailing situations. Naturally, they will judge and act on the basis of the present scenario. The opening of Engineering and Medical colleges does not come under the ambit of development until

its graduates are absorbed into jobs. Presently unemployment is a big problem, not only in Bihar but in all the states. All the vacant seats in government as well as private sectors have to be filled up. Small scale and agriculture based industries should be established. Various defunct factories should be revived. The Central government will have to make a policy to set up new heavy industry factories in backward regions like Bihar. The rivers should be connected to tackle the problem of seasonal drought & flood. The shortcomings prevailing in schools, colleges, hospitals, transport and other sectors should be carefully rectified. Criminals and Corrupt persons should be crushed. Officers belonging to depressed class should also be positioned on strategic posts. The government should make time bound programme in all works sector for its timely implementation.

Nitish Kumar has always been criticized by his so-called secular political opposition parties for his alignment with the BJP, although previously all non-Congress governments in Bihar have been formed with direct or indirect support from BJP or the erstwhile Jansangh. In 1990, Laloo Prasad had become CM with the support of BJP. In 2014, Nitish also tried to part away from the BJP when its leadership was transferred to Narendra Modi; but in the election, his works were not converted in to votes and as earlier castes & religion remain the major poll issue. Despite being in alliance with BJP, he never compromised with 3 "C" i.e. Crime, Corruption and Communalism. Unlike the Congress regime, his whole tenure remained riot-free.

Nitish Kumar has always been a struggler since the inception of his political career. In the political war of 2020, it was his struggle that despite being the target of all powerful groups comprising of opposition alliances, Liquor Mafia, biased electronic media as well as his own ally BJP's core upper caste voters, he won the battle, with some bruises in terms of less number of seats. As per pre-Poll strategy, Nitish has become 34th CM of Bihar despite having less number of lawmakers of his Party and seeing the history of BJP's "Chaal, Charitra, Chehara", it is obvious that his struggle would still continue.

Due to deceit in the election, day to day criticism by BJP leaders and a conspiracy to break up JDU on the tune of Maharashtra, Nitish came out of NDA and formed Maha Gathbandhan government on 10th August, 2022 with the support of Lalu Prasad-led RJD & UPA and took oath as CM at 8th time. Although Nitish has announced to fight Vidhan Sabha election under leadership of Tejaswi Yadav, but Lalu was in hurry to make Tejaswi as CM by breaking some Nitish's MLA. Such conspiracy, forced Nitish to rethink his alliance with Lalu and ultimately he resigned on 28th January 2024 to form again NDA government in Bihar. Nitish Kumar took oath as record 9th times.

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