

KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

The Khelo India Winter Games in Leh, held annually, have become a significant event in the promotion of winter sports in India, especially in the Himalayan region. These games, part of the broader Khelo India initiative launched by the Indian government, are designed to tap into the potential of India's youth, fostering sports culture at the grassroots level and creating champions for the future. The winter games held in Leh, a picturesque town in the cold deserts of Ladakh, provide a platform for athletes to showcase their skills in various winter sports disciplines, ranging from skiing to ice hockey.

The Khelo India Winter Games were first introduced in 2020, and since then, they have seen significant participation from young athletes across the country. The event is seen as a stepping stone for emerging athletes from Ladakh and other parts of India who may not have had access to advanced sports facilities or platforms in the past. These games provide a critical opportunity for winter sports enthusiasts to display their skills in front of coaches, scouts, and government officials who can help nurture their careers.

A key goal of the games is to provide the youth of Ladakh with exposure to professional training and competition. Winter sports, including skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, ice hockey, and snowshoe racing, are a big part of the region's culture and tradition. However, before the introduction of such programs, these sports did not receive the same attention or support as other mainstream sports like cricket or football. The Khelo India Winter Games have brought these sports into the limelight, encouraging more children and young people to take them up as careers.

In addition to the focus on sports, the games also promote tourism in Ladakh, an area that has slowly become a popular tourist destination. The games bring in spectators, media, and officials from across the country, which helps generate economic activity in the region. The event also serves as an excellent opportunity for local athletes to represent their region on a national stage and for the youth to connect with one another, sharing their passion for winter sports.

Beyond the thrill of competition, the Khelo India Winter Games have an overarching focus on fitness, health, and well-being. By encouraging youth to engage in sports, the event not only promotes a healthy lifestyle but also helps to develop qualities such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience.

The Khelo India Winter Games in Leh represent more than just a sporting event. They are an essential part of a larger movement to boost winter sports in India, provide youth with greater opportunities, and celebrate the rich culture of Ladakh. It has the potential to play a pivotal role in shaping India's future in winter sports.

■ SUNAINA MIR

It is a matter of profound distress that the brutal crime of child abuse is mounting day by day in our Indian society. A society which was once praised for her compassion, ethnicity and traditions has now turned into a crime prone society. A society where eight cases of child abuse are reported every day, India has achieved No. 1 rank in crime of child abuse. According to statement of released by Louis Georges (UNICEF representative of Indian state) it is alarming that one in three rape victims is a child. More than 7,200 children are raped every year. Amid numerous Indian states Kerala topped by representing 70 per cent child abuse cases. To your revelation child abuse cases have increased by 417 per cent from last year. In addition to this, as per the survey conducted by Indian Govt. in 2007 where 1,25,000 children of 13 different states of India were interviewed, 53 per cent of them said that they have been subjected to

one or more form of sexual abuse. Out of them 57 per cent were boys.

Sexual assault with children is not the only face of child abuse. Following are the some other major forms of child abuse punishable under (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act 2012).

Physical Abuse- It include striking, kicking, shaking, starving or throwing any object over a child with an intention to cause physical injury on child's body.

Neglect- Neglect is that form of child abuse where a child is subjected to emotional or physical harm due to neglect of his parents, guardian or any other oppressor.

Emotional Abuse- It include unnecessary and continuous criticism of child. This abuse has negative effect on child's emotional development.

Substance Abuse- This form of child abuse include giving of Alcohol, Tobacco, Illicit drugs to a child to effect his or her judgment or to put child's life in danger.

drones under the property survey program which was launched in 2020.He said 2.25 crore in villages have so far received legal documents for their houses under the scheme. Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh said ,"SVAMITVA Schemes consensus -Based Approach Resolves village disputes ,fosters unity .He further added that." property cards will enable formal credit access ,empower women ,make villages self-reliant .In fact in a historic and transformative moment for rural India, PM Modi recently presided over the largest -ever distribution of property cards ceremony under the SVAMITVA Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj ,empowering 65 lakh rural citizens with legal ownership documents in a single day. Besides some ministers from the union cabinet, there was large participation from citizens as well as Panchayat representatives and officials of line departments across 237 districts ,with 9 union ministers personally overseeing regional distribution ceremonies. The momentous e-distribution ceremony, conducted via video conferencing ,covered more than 50,000 villages across 10 states and 2 union territories ,marking an unprecedented milestone in rural governance and empowerment. The distribution ceremony encompassed beneficiaries from Chhattisgarh,Gujarat ,Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha ,Punjab ,Rajasthan ,Uttar Pradesh, and the UT's of Jammu and Kashmir &n Ladakh. This remarkable achievement brings the total number of property cards distributed under SVAMITYA scheme to 2.25 crore. It is pertinent to mention that five years ago ,the SVAMITVA scheme was launched to ensure that the people residing in rural areas receive their property cards. Over 1.5 crore people have been issued SVAMITVA cards in past five years. Remarking that 21st century presents numerous challenges

Indian car buyers have not really been exposed to customer care in a competitive environment.

-Ratan Tata

National Girl Child Day: January 24

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

The 24th day of January every year is dedicated to every girl child, a very important part of country's young population and the other pillar of human civilization. The day also focuses on awareness regarding various issues related to gender equality, girls' rights, education, health, and their empowerment. The day also aims to change the attitude of society toward women. History is full of examples where women have made society bow down to their indomitable spirit. There used to be a time when women weren't even allowed to leave their homes. During that dark era, women like Savitribai, Fatima Sheikh and Chandraprabha Saikiani dreamt of learning and teaching. They are considered to be India's first female teachers who changed the way people thought about women's education.

Without them, we cannot survive. Unfortunately, even today a girl child faces a lot of discrimination even in her family and outside. A girl child is the sweetest blessing and most beautiful creation of God. But starting from female infanticide to gender inequality to sexual abuse, there is no dearth of issues for a girl child. Despite several policies and programmes, lower health outcomes for girl children and women still persist in India in one or the other form. Certain forms of discrimination especially the son preference reinforced by the techno-economic forces are eliminating the girl child (even from the womb). The increasing population in India was not accompanied by an increase in child sex ratio. The child sex ratio is calculated as number of girls per 1000 boys. In the census 2001 the child sex ratio of India was 927 which declined to 919 in the census 2011. As per the census 2011, Arunachal Pradesh has the highest child sex ratio among the Indian states i.e. 972 while Haryana has the lowest child sex ratio i.e.834 per thousand males. There are also states such as Puducherry and Kerala where the number of women is more than the number of men. Kerala houses a number of 1084 females to that of 1000

males. Among the Union Territories of India Andaman and Nicobar Islands has the highest child sex ratio i.e. 878 per thousand males. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir too, the child sex ratio was shockingly down from 941 in census 2001 to 883 in 2021. A stage may soon come where it would become extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make up for the 'missing girls'. A latest report from the state of Haryana says that the sex ratio in the state in 2025 has reached to as low as 879 i. e for 1000 male which is well below national average. Even today, in the country many villages are having fewer or no small daughters. This ultimately has the potential to destroy the social fabric of the country. This low sex ratio is attributed to societal bias against the girl child and inadequate enforcement of laws against female infanticide.

As of 2025, India's population stands at about 1.44 billion which includes 743.39 million males and 698.29 million females. Men make up to 51.56% of the population where as women account for 48.44% of the population. This percentage makes a difference of around 45 million more men than women. Globally this places India at 214th out of 236 countries for female to male ratio, highlighting the need for greater gender balance. According to National Health Family Survey NHFS-5 for the 2020-21, India's sex ratio in 2023 was 1020 females per 1000 males.

Our society still suffers from various social issues. Preference of the society for the male child instead of a girl, only son can look after old age parents, girls have to be married with exorbitant dowry, only son can perform last rites and men are bread earners are some of the irrelevant justifications commonly attributed to this. There still exists a regressive mindset. There is considerable son preference in all states, except possibly in Kerala and Chhattisgarh. The misuse of cheaper technology like ultrasound which helps in sex selection is also on the rise. The Prenatal Conception and Prenatal Determination Act (PC-PNDT), 1994 which punishes healthcare professionals for telling expectant par-

ents the sex of a child with imprisonment and hefty fines, has failed to control the sex selection. There are major gaps in the training of personnel implementing PC-PNDT. Poor training meant that they were unable to prepare strong cases against violators to secure convictions. Illiterate women in the reproductive age group of 15-49 years have higher fertility than literate women. The continuous decline in numbers of girls in the age group 0-6 years compared with boys in several states has shocked demographers in India and has made policy makers sit up and take notice. Recently, C. Rangarajan former Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council argued that there is an urgent need to reach young people both for reproductive health education and services as well as to cultivate gender equity norms.

To address all these and to highlight the inequalities faced by girls, National Girl Child is celebrated every year on January 24. The day is an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and has been celebrated since 2008. This day aims to provide support and opportunities to the girls of India. It also aims towards promoting awareness about gender based discrimination, the rights of the girl child, an increased focus on the importance of girl education, health and nutrition and to bring change in the attitude towards girls. The Indian government has also taken several steps over the years to change this and improve the conditions of girls. Several campaigns and programs such as 'Save the Girl Child', 'Beti Bachao Beti Padoa', free or subsidized education for the girl children, reservations for women in colleges and universities have been initiated to reduce this discrimination. Beti Bachao Beti Padoa (BBBP) Scheme was launched in 2015 from Panipat in Haryana to address the issue of decline in child sex ratio and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum. The BBBP is a triministerial effort of the ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Education.

Mira Shiva, the then Head of Public Policy and Director of women's health and Development and Rational Drug Policy at the Voluntary Health Association of India, a leading health Non Governmental Organization, blames the epidemic of killing female fetuses in the womb on the widespread availability and affordability of ultrasound machines, which are used for sex determination of the fetus. Mothers then proceed to have a termination if the fetus is found to be female. Despite legislation, sex determination tests have continued and have spread rapidly even to remote areas. The 'missing girls' essentially means that millions of medical consultations and abortions have taken place and it is not possible without the involvement of some medical professionals who for the sake of some money bring disregard for the whole medical fraternity.

No doubt celebrating this important day is a novel concept, but alone this will not serve our purpose. With this the government should also focus on increasing female education. Increasing female education will lead to their economic prosperity which will help to improve the ratio. The government should also roll out campaigns on sensitization towards women and children, making women safety cells, ensuring the safety of women on public transport systems, making cyber-crime cells and a host of other girl child friendly initiatives.

On the occasion of this important day of the Girl Child, let us recognize the rights of girls and also the problems they face around the globe to give them a better life, a better future. It also reminds us that it is our responsibility to give them the importance they deserve and work together for their happier lives. It is the right time to honor their back and make it a happy day of the Girls Child. The world will be a better place to live the day the girl child is as happy as the other gender. All of us should commit ourselves to work in synergy to make this dream come true.

(The author writes on agriculture and social issues)

Ensure safety of a girl child

Abandonment- In this form of child abuse, the child is left alone without food, medicine or care. This form of child abuse is generally committed by teachers, parents or guardians. The abandonment of child in a dark room for a longer period can have deep harmful effects on psychological development of a child. Abandonment for a longer period of time can also take a child's life.

As per the records, the crime of child abuse is commonly committed by the persons known to child like neighbours, family members, maternal and paternal uncles and people living in same colony like shop keepers, peons and daily visitors of one's home. The relations on which we were taught to believe are now turned into criminals or perpetrators. There was a time when trust over the relations was the soul of human dwellings but today the emotion of trust has completely faded from our society due to the breach of trust by relation like father, teachers, guardians and

even loyal servants. Irony to our crime prone society is that our mothers are living in an ambience full of anxiety and trauma. It is very hard for family to pass that time when their children are away from home. Every moment a mother feels the hands of criminal approaching towards her child in school, tuition center, play ground and market. Crime on our innocent children has bowed down the head of humanity and raised innumerable quarries over the courtousness of our society. It is very intricate to nourish a healthy progeny in such a kind of society.

After sensing the gravity of situation following are the points which can help us in saving our flowers from getting blemished.

(1) In this alarming type of situation, the responsibility of saving the plantlets of our future progeny fall heavily on our mothers. They must never leave their children at the mercy of servants, neighbours or any male relative. Child may be boy or girl.

(2) Ensure regular monitoring of your child in school or tuition centers.

(3)Accompany your child during playing hours because play grounds, parks or any such places remain over crowded with criminals in the face of acquaintances.

(4) Don't force your child to go alone for some shopping because children are weak and innocent and easily fall a prey to criminals. Criminal can easily kidnap a lonely child

(5) Don't leave your child for night stay at your neighbour's house.

(6)Monitor your child during family functions and festival celebrations. It is during these occasions that impostures try to take benefit of our innocents.

(7) Develop friendly relations with your children so that they may easily disclose any unusual happening happened with them in schools, tuition centers or any such place.

(8) Give full awareness about happening of crimes to your child.

(9) Make your child aware about

apprehension of danger in the society.

(10) Prohibit your child from accepting any eatable like ice-cream, chocolate, cold drink or any sweet from any alien. Criminals usually use these things to lure any innocent and later on fulfill their illicit and shameful aims.

(11) Train your child to be very vigilant in situations of criminal assault on him or her or on any of his friends. They must be very vigorous in saving their self or their friends from criminals. Every child must be trained enough to complain any unusual happening to police station or to his or her elders.

(12) Last but not the least spread the awareness among those who are working in your homes, labourer's families and people living in slums . your small effort can save a naïve from getting spoiled.

As we all know that prevention is better than cure. So above mention preventive measures can curtail the rate of child abuse to a large extent.

PM Modi's Epoch-making SVAMITVA Scheme

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi has said that real India lives in villages. Further it is safe and correct to say that India is basically and primarily an agricultural country and economy. PM Modi is translating into practice the Gandhi's vision of the upliftment of rural economy and thus is his government embarking programs and policies oriented in scientific, technological and innovative ways for the development of the Indian economy in general and rural economy in particular .The distribution of Svanitva cards at a very large scale to the rural residents of India is a step in materializing the Gandhi's vision of rural economy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the master strategist and expert in making innovations for the development of the country and for ensuring the welfare of the people especially the residents of rural India. The distribution of Svanitva cards to a huge number of rural residents numbering over 65 lakh in 50,000 villages is not an ordinary thing but is in fact historical. It will directly benefit the farmers and land owners as well as owners of houses in rural areas as their landed property and houses has been digitized and this policy will result in reduction of the property disputes and lead to comfortable life to the farmers and property holders in rural India.PM Modi while addressing an event to distribute over 65 lakh property cards to property owners in over fifty thousand villages across 230 districts through video conferencing. Terming the property cards distributed under centre's SVAMITVA scheme a "guarantee of economic security,"Modi said these documents once issued in all the villages of the country ,will unlock economic activity worth over Rs 100 lakh crore. Calling it a "historic day for villages and rural areas of India ,"he said half of the country's more than six lakh villages had been surveyed by

,including climate change ,water scarcity ,health crises and pandemics ,PM highlighted that another significant challenge the world faces is property rights and the lack of legal property documents. He cited a UN study that revealed many people in various countries do not have proper legal documents for their property. He added that the UN emphasized that reducing property requires people to have property rights. He highlighted that after receiving legal documents ,lakhs of people had taken loans from banks based on their property ,starting small businesses in their villages. Many of these beneficiaries are small and medium farmer families ,for whom these property cards have become a significant guarantee of economic security. The Dalit, backward, and tribal families were most affected by illegal occupations and long and lingering court disputes. But now with legal documents ,they would now be free from this crisis.PM said that once property cards are issued in all villages in the country, it will unlock economic activities worth over 100 lakh crore rupees .The SVAMITVA cards will minimize property disputes ,enables modernization of assets, enhance livelihood and will foster economic empowerment and economic development in rural India. Union Minister of Panchayat Raj Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh emphasized at the historic event that on the unprecedented scale of the SVAMITVA property cards distribution has reached 237 districts through coordinated physical programs. He underlined that the distribution of 65 lakh property cards marks a transformative moment ,empowering an equal number of rural households with the legal ownership rights. The minister highlighted how SVAMITVA scheme has become a cornerstone of rural empowerment .He particularly praised the Schemes consensus based approach to property documentation ,noting that this col-

laborative method has significantly reduced village disputes and strengthened community harmony. In fact these property cards would not only facilitate access to banking services and formal credit but also serve as powerful tools for dispute resolution .This scheme has great role in women empowerment ,with many women now recognized as property owners or co-owners ,marking a significant step towards gender equality in rural India. One can opine that SVAMITVA is not just about property rights. It is about making our villages self-reliant and our rural citizens Atmanirbhar. In fact SVAMITYA Scheme will generate new employment opportunities and enable rural entrepreneurship through improved access to financial services .This comprehensive approach aligns perfectly with PM's vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat, where rural India plays a central role in the country's progress and prosperity. The SVAMITYA Scheme, launched by PM Modi on 24TH April 2020,has emerged as a game-changing initiative in revolutionizing rural land governance .The scheme has successfully mapped over 3.17 lakh villages using advanced drone technology ,covering an impressive 67,000 square Kilometers of rural residential land valued at Rs 132 lakh crore. The success of SVAMITYA has garnered international attention ,with India's innovative land governance model set to be showcased at an International Workshop in March 2025 and the World Bank Land Governance Conference in May 2025.This global recognition highlights India's leadership in leveraging technology for sustainable development and grassroots governance .In short this scheme will transform and revolutionize the rural economy and rural India. So SVAMITVA Scheme is no less than rural revolution.

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Empowering Girls for a Bright Future

■ DR. KANIKA GUPTA

Every January 24, India celebrates National Girl Child Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the rights, opportunities, and empowerment of girl children. This observance highlights the importance of providing an enabling environment where girls can thrive and reach their full potential. "Every girl has the right to dream, the power to achieve, and the courage to change the world".

The theme for 2025, "Empowering Girls for a Bright Future," resonates deeply with the need to prioritize gender equality and ensure that every girl child has access to education, health, and opportunities that foster growth.

"Girls with dreams become women with vision".

The Present Reality

Despite notable progress, girls in India continue to face significant challenges. Gender-based disparities, child marriage, limited access to education, and safety concerns remain persistent hurdles.Statistics show that a large percentage of girls drop out of school due to financial constraints, household responsibilities, or societal norms. For those who manage to complete their education, entering the workforce can still be an uphill battle, given gender bias and unequal opportunities.

Why Empowering Girls Matters

Empowering girls is not just about addressing inequities but also about unleashing the immense potential that lies within them. An educated and empowered girl becomes an asset not only to her family but to society as a whole.

1. Education for Empowerment: Educated girls are more likely to secure better jobs, delay marriage, and ensure that their children receive education and healthcare.

2. Economic Growth: Closing gender gaps in education and workforce participation can significantly boost economic

development.

3. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Empowered girls contribute to breaking intergenerational poverty by creating healthier, more educated families.

Celebrating Success Stories

India has no shortage of inspiring stories of girls who have defied odds to make a mark. Girls from rural villages are becoming coders, athletes, scientists, and entrepreneurs. Initiatives like Ladli Beti inJammu and Kashmir and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao nationally have played a vital role in nurturing such success stories.

A Call to Action

On this National Girl Child Day, let us reflect on what more can be done to empower girls:

► Community Support: Families and communities must provide a safe and encouraging environment for girls to pursue their aspirations.

► Educational Opportunities: Governments and NGOs must work together to ensure access to quality education and scholarships for girls.

► Skill Development: Programs that equip girls with vocational and digital skills can prepare them for future opportunities.

► Combating Stereotypes: Society must challenge outdated gender norms that restrict girls from realizing their potential.

Building a Bright Future

As we celebrate National Girl Child Day 2025, let us commit to creating a society where every girl feels valued, safe, and empowered. The future of our nation depends on the contributions of these young change-makers. By investing in their growth today, we lay the foundation for a brighter, more inclusive tomorrow.Let us all come together to ensure that every girl child can dream big and achieve even bigger. After all, when girls thrive, so does society.

(The author is a Ph.D. in Human Development from University of Jammu)

