

## EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS

India, traditionally known for its cultural heritage and diversity, has been making significant strides in the field of sports over the last few decades. From humble beginnings to global recognition, the country's sports landscape has evolved dramatically, and today, India stands as a rising power in the international sporting arena. The journey toward sporting excellence in India has been shaped by a combination of government initiatives, individual achievements, and an ever-growing passion for sports across various disciplines.

One of the key factors contributing to sports excellence in India has been the robust government initiatives aimed at fostering sporting talent. The Indian government has implemented several schemes and programs designed to support athletes, provide better facilities, and ensure that sports receive the necessary attention. Programs like Khelo India, launched in 2018, are dedicated to identifying young talent, providing them with world-class coaching, and offering financial support for their development. The National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) and Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) have also been crucial in preparing athletes for global competitions by offering training, sports science support, and adequate funding.

The National Sports Policy, first introduced in 2001 and updated later, is another significant milestone in improving India's sporting infrastructure. The policy emphasizes the importance of grassroots development, professional coaching, and the promotion of sports across the nation. Furthermore, the establishment of specialized training centers and sports academies in various parts of India has given young athletes the resources to hone their skills.

India has had its share of remarkable achievements on the global sports stage, with athletes making the country proud across various sports. Cricket, the most popular sport in India, has seen the country achieve consistent success on the international stage.

India's hockey team, once a dominant force, has seen a resurgence in recent years. The men's team won the Olympic bronze medal in 2021, a historic achievement that sparked new hope for the sport. The women's team also made an impressive run in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, reaching the semi-finals and finishing fourth. The growth in sports excellence has also been driven by improved infrastructure. The journey of sports excellence in India has been an inspiring one, marked by growth in infrastructure, policy reforms, and individual excellence. With continued government support, corporate involvement, and an emphasis on grassroots development, the future of Indian sports looks promising.

India is now on the path to becoming a global sports powerhouse, with more and more athletes setting new benchmarks of excellence in international competitions. As India continues to invest in its sporting culture, it will undoubtedly see more world-class athletes emerging from all corners of the country.

## A New Year's call for Unity, Progress and Humanity

■ ABDUL QUDDIR KUNDIRA



As we step into a new year, let us come together with a shared vision of unity, progress, and compassion for all, across every corner of our beloved India, including Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. This year, and the years that follow, should serve as a reminder of our collective responsibility to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and peace that bind us together.

The foundation of any harmonious society is laid within the home. If there are misunderstandings or grievances within our families, it is crucial that we address them with patience, dialogue, and love. The ability to resolve conflicts within the family unit prevents them from growing into larger issues that might affect the larger society. A home built on love, mutual respect, and understanding sets a positive example, reducing the need for legal interventions and fostering an atmosphere of trust. It is within these walls that we first learn the values that will define our society—compassion, respect, and harmony. Let us all strive to make our homes havens of peace and understanding, because from there, the spirit of unity will spread to the wider community.

As we reflect on the challenges and aspirations of this new year, one of the most pressing matters that need our immediate attention is the role of youth in society. Our young generation holds the promise of a bright future, and it is our duty to nurture them. They have the potential to drive positive change, but they need the right guidance, resources, and opportunities to channel their energy and skills effectively.

Unfortunately, the specter of drug abuse and addiction has increasingly cast a shadow over the lives of many young people. The widespread use of substances such as drugs, alcohol, and even cigarettes not only harms the individual but also wreaks havoc on families and communities. The lure of these substances may appear appealing to some, but

they ultimately lead to despair, broken relationships, and a generation lost to addiction. Drugs and their associated crimes corrode the fabric of society, creating an environment where hopelessness flourishes.

To combat this, we must take decisive steps to address the root causes. Education plays a critical role in prevention. Schools and community centers should serve as places of awareness and support, helping young people understand the dangers of drug abuse. Beyond simply raising awareness, it is essential to provide opportunities for young people to thrive. Our youth must be able to envision a future where they can succeed, contribute, and lead a life of dignity.

Additionally, those who have already succumbed to addiction need support and care. Rehabilitation centers, counseling services, and strong community networks are essential for helping individuals reclaim their lives and reintegrate into society. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that no young person feels alone in their struggles, and to provide them with the tools to overcome these challenges and rebuild their futures.

It is also essential to address the issue of unemployment, especially among educated youth. Many young people, having invested their time and energy in education, find themselves struggling to secure meaningful employment. Whether they are recent graduates, diploma holders, or skilled professionals, it is disheartening to see so much talent going to waste due to a lack of opportunities.

It is incumbent upon us-government bodies, the private sector, and society at large—to create avenues for meaningful work. By fostering entrepreneurship, supporting small businesses, and offering targeted skills development programs, we can help young people find work that is aligned with their education and aspirations. In doing so, we will not only alleviate unemployment but also contribute to the nation's growth by tapping into the vast potential of its educated youth.

In parallel, we must focus on the welfare of marginalized groups such as laborers, domestic workers, and the underprivileged.

These communities often work tirelessly, yet they remain trapped in cycles of poverty. It is our moral duty to ensure that they receive fair wages, equal opportunities, and the dignity they deserve. As we enter the new year, let us resolve to take concrete steps toward alleviating hunger and poverty and ensuring that no one is left behind in our pursuit of progress.

Another critical area that demands our attention is the development of education and infrastructure in rural areas. In many parts of India, especially in remote villages, children are deprived of access to quality education due to a lack of schools or colleges nearby. We must advocate for the expansion of educational opportunities in rural areas by upgrading primary and middle schools to higher secondary levels, and establishing colleges in these remote regions. Only then will the children from these areas be empowered to build a brighter future and contribute to the nation's progress.

Education, however, cannot stand alone without proper infrastructure to support it. Rural communities often lack the necessary facilities to ensure that their children can study, grow, and thrive. The construction of better roads, reliable drainage systems, and bridges should be prioritized, as these essential amenities will significantly improve the quality of life for residents and enable access to educational institutions and healthcare services. By working together with local governments, district administrations, and law enforcement agencies, we can implement effective programs aimed at both development and job creation in these regions.

Furthermore, it is imperative that we never lose sight of the plight of the most vulnerable members of our society—widows, orphans, and the impoverished. These individuals face daily challenges that we often overlook in our busy lives. We must take it upon ourselves to extend a helping hand, whether through organizing community initiatives, providing financial aid, or offering emotional support. By uplifting the most marginalized, we show the true spirit of humanity and

compassion, and we create a society where everyone can live with dignity and respect.

In the midst of all this, we must guard against misinformation and rumors that have the power to divide and destroy the harmony we so desperately need. False rumors can cause unnecessary conflicts and deepen existing rifts in communities. Let us instead focus on activities that promote peace, mutual understanding, and respect. Participating in cultural and artistic events, sharing stories, and engaging in dialogue are powerful ways to foster communal harmony and keep the flame of unity burning bright.

As we celebrate the arrival of the new year, we must also teach our children the values that will help create a better world. Respect for elders, kindness to others, and a commitment to humanity should be instilled in the younger generation from an early age. By nurturing these qualities, we are laying the foundation for a society that values dignity and empathy. Our actions today will shape the leaders of tomorrow, and it is crucial that we set the right example.

Finally, let us not forget that the youth are the torchbearers of progress. They are the innovators, the creators, and the leaders who will guide our country to a prosperous future. Let this new year inspire them to tackle the issues that plague our society—from drug addiction and unemployment to education and infrastructure and take bold steps toward a better tomorrow. We must encourage them to dream big, work hard, and stay focused on the greater good of the nation.

When our nation prospers, we all prosper. This New Year, let us renew our commitment to working together for the welfare of our country. By doing so, we can ensure that India remains a beacon of happiness, peace, and prosperity for future generations. Let us build a future where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive, and where unity, progress, and humanity are the guiding principles that shape our path forward.

(The writer is an eminent Dogri Poet/Writer of Jammu and Kashmir)

## AI has potential to drastically speed societal transitions

■ SURJIT FLORA FLORA

Without a doubt, artificial intelligence (AI) will change how we interact with our work and daily lives. The advancements in AI are profound and are reshaping numerous facets of our existence.

With the advent of 2025 on the horizon, the swift advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is set to profoundly impact multiple domains, particularly in healthcare and finance. We anticipate that the integration of AI within these domains will enhance efficiency, precision, and accessibility.

By 2025, we expect AI technologies to transition from experimental initiatives to comprehensive, organization-wide implementations. This evolution will empower AI systems to independently cultivate advanced AI models, promoting innovation and accelerating technological progress.

Artificial intelligence will transform diagnostics, enhance predictive analytics, and tailor personalized treatment plans in the healthcare sector. We anticipate that the integration of AI-driven tools will improve patient outcomes and optimize operational efficiency. Furthermore, the emergence of telehealth services, enhanced by artificial intelligence, is poised to broaden access to healthcare while simultaneously lowering expenses.

The financial sector stands on the brink of significant change, as investment banks prepare to adopt AI technologies aimed at reducing the monotony of repetitive tasks faced by junior bankers. Through the automation of numerical analysis and the drafting of regulatory documents, artificial intelligence

will enable financial professionals to concentrate on more significant tasks, thereby improving productivity and job satisfaction.

**Challenges and Considerations:**

In light of these advancements, the integration of AI into pre-existing systems poses a series of complex challenges. Organizations are required to modify their frameworks and processes to optimally utilize the capabilities of AI. To make sure that AI technologies are used responsibly, they need to be carefully looked over because they have ethical effects like data privacy and the possibility of job loss.

**Improved Customer Service:**

AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants are evolving in their ability to comprehend and address customer inquiries with greater nuance. The application of natural language processing empowers these systems to deliver tailored and effective customer support, thereby enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

**Autonomous Vehicles:**

Artificial intelligence significantly propels the advancement of autonomous vehicles by facilitating real-time perception, decision-making, and navigation capabilities through machine learning algorithms. This technology possesses the capacity to transform transportation fundamentally, enhancing safety, efficiency, and accessibility.

**Smart Homes and Cities:**

The integration of AI technologies into smart home devices and urban infrastructure is fostering environments that are increasingly interconnected and efficient. Through the implementation of voice-controlled assistants, energy management systems, intelligent traffic con-

trol, and waste management solutions, artificial intelligence is enhancing the intelligence and sustainability of our living environments.

**Data Analysis and Insights:**

Advanced methodologies, including data mining, predictive analytics, and natural language processing, enable organizations to derive significant insights from extensive datasets. This facilitates well-informed decision-making, precise marketing efforts, and enhanced business strategies.

Although AI offers significant possibilities, it concurrently prompts important ethical and societal reflections. The realms of privacy, job displacement, algorithmic bias, and the imperative for regulation demand meticulous scrutiny as artificial intelligence progresses. Nevertheless, we cannot deny AI's capacity to transform our professional and personal spheres, and we expect its influence to expand in the years ahead.

**Anticipating the Future of AI**

**Improved Personalization:** AI is set to further enhance its capacity to deliver exceptionally tailored experiences across entertainment, shopping, and education, ensuring that interactions are increasingly relevant and captivating.

**Enhanced Healthcare:** AI is set to revolutionize predictive analytics, tailor personalized medicine, and streamline automated diagnostics, resulting in a more precise and efficient healthcare experience.

**Smart Cities:**

AI is set to revolutionize urban infrastructure management, streamline energy consumption, bolster public safety, and refine transportation systems, ultimately creating more sustainable and

enjoyable urban environments.

**Workforce Transformation:**

As automation takes over certain roles, a wave of new opportunities will emerge in AI development, maintenance, and ethical oversight. Continuous education and skill enhancement will be crucial.

As AI continues to weave itself into the fabric of our everyday lives, the spotlight will increasingly shine on ethical considerations, transparency, and accountability. It's essential that AI systems are designed to be fair, unbiased, and respectful of user privacy.

**Elevating Human-Machine Collaboration:**

AI empowers individuals by enhancing their capabilities, allowing them to concentrate on intricate, creative, and strategic endeavors while AI efficiently manages routine and repetitive tasks.

**In conclusion**

AI is revolutionizing our everyday experiences in numerous areas, including personal assistance, healthcare, transportation, and finance. With the progression of technology, its influence will expand, presenting fresh opportunities and challenges ahead. The future of AI is brimming with possibilities to elevate both individual and collective well-being, as long as it is crafted and executed with responsibility and ethics at the forefront. On the one hand, artificial intelligence has unquestionably left its imprint on a variety of facets of our life. Consider the prevalence of virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa; after all, they are everywhere, right? As a result of their ability to do activities such as answering queries and creating reminders, they have become very neces-

sary for a lot of individuals. Artificial intelligence is also being used in fields such as healthcare, banking, and transportation, where it is causing a revolution in the way things are done, often for the better.

Nevertheless, when it comes to employment, the situation becomes somewhat more problematic. It is true that artificial intelligence is automating some processes, which may result in the elimination of certain employment. For instance, in the industrial industry, robots are expanding their ability to do tasks that were formerly performed by people. On the other hand, they are not all bad news. Further, artificial intelligence generates new possibilities and perhaps whole businesses. Take, for example, the field of data science. People who are able to deal with data and AI algorithms are in high demand as artificial intelligence (AI) continues to grow.

In the narrative, a new artificial intelligence takes control of the planet after a nuclear war occurs. In the aftermath of the war, devastated nations come to an agreement to establish an organization that is comparable to the United Nations but has more authority. This organization will have the mandate to prevent future wars, to clean up environmental damage, and to preserve human cultures.

Although the majority of people are unaware of the fact that the new ruling organization, which is known as the Commission, is an artificial intelligence, they are also unaware of the extent of the authority that it has. The existence of individual nations continues. It is true that these nations have governments. There is no change in the

enforcement of the laws of those nations. Only in situations where individuals or the government violate the Commission's mandate does the Commission step in to interfere, and even then, its actions are so subtle that the majority of people are not aware of them.

Despite the fact that the majority of people are unaware of this fact, humans are no longer in charge. In this regard, it is comparable to lions in the Serengeti. The human species has long ago surpassed the lions as the dominating species; but, from their point of view, the lions continue to be the most dominant species in their game park setting.

I would not argue that artificial intelligence is "taking over" in the sense of entirely replacing people, despite the fact that it is unquestionably altering the landscape of our lives and the job that we do. As an alternative, the question is more about how we adjust to this new reality. In order to better prepare people for employment that complement artificial intelligence rather than ones that compete with it, we may need to rethink education and training. There is also the issue of ethics, which involves making sure that artificial intelligence is employed in a responsible and ethical manner.

In conclusion, we anticipate substantial advancements across various sectors in 2025, marking a crucial juncture for artificial intelligence. Businesses could be more productive and creative if they use AI technologies correctly, but only if they carefully think about how to deal with the problems that come with them.

(The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton)

## Opportunities and Challenges in ICTs for Rural Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Majority of world's population lives in rural areas and rural people are characterized mainly by dependence on agriculture for their livelihood. Tremendous efforts are made by the major development agencies to improve the well-being of these rural people. The efforts are made to improve their crops productivity and small scale industries in rural areas. Information communication technologies (ICTs) play an important role in all spheres of our life. It is widely used by academicians, corporate sector, NGOs and private organisations and business man. The development in ICT calls for immediate attention of its use in agriculture and allied fields. Extension scientists are not exception to it. ICT is helpful in seeking variety of information, quick transfer of information, fast feedback system and clarification of queries. It surpasses the traditional methods of dissemination information. Empirical studies show that some scientists still show resistance to use internet and e-services or work on computer which created a gap. This gap can be filled by motivating scientists through training interventions as it is very easy to use the computer and internet. In present era, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the developmental tools. The information and communication

technologies applications in agriculture and rural development are very extensive and pervasive. Agricultural information systems have attracted much attention because of the importance of facilitating access to information and knowledge. The information and communication technologies have the capacity to empower the people of rural areas. Now we are in front of a major technological revolution that can significantly develop the society. The information systems themselves are in the process of profound transformation with the spectacular development of internet. Beyond information systems and data bases, the use of ICTs in agriculture and rural development are observed everywhere. Now the researchers, extension workers and farmers are involved in transforming extension services through the use of multimedia technologies. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are opening new approaches to manage the natural resources and regional planning. Now the electronic networks are changing the way of research and interaction between the scientist, extension personnel and farmer.

Knowledge plays a critical role in mitigating the challenges of food security, poverty eradication and sustainable development in any society. Information and communication technologies have played an important role in promoting the agricultural and

rural development during the last many years. The role of television, radio and print media in rural development is well known and they will continue with the new information and technologies. The convergence of technological sectors namely telecommunication technology, computers and information processing technology, data and image transfer technology and interactive multimedia have characterizes the new information and communication technologies. The convergence of these sectors has created not only the new technological and production sector but also a new social and economic reality. Now improved information and communication technologies, increased information and management skills and decreasing communication costs are making quick information flows. The internet connectivity is still very limited in our country specially in rural areas. This problem can be solved through information and communication technologies that can be used even when the World Wide Web is not accessible. There are many technologies that do not require on line access e.g. CD-ROM technology and many other technologies. Now the internet use has also been started even in rural areas.

In India there is enormous potential of the ICTs that has to be harnessed for overall agricultural development in particular

and hence societal transformation in general. Access to new information sources is a crucial requirement for the sustainable development of farming systems. The ICTs can enable an extension worker to gather, store, retrieve and disseminate a broad range of information needs of the farmers thus converting his nature as knowledge worker. Then the knowledge worker can realize the bottom up and demand driven technology generation, assessment, refinement and dissemination. Subsistence farmers have least access to information for improving the productivity. With ICTs services, small-scale farmers will not be isolated but self-sufficient. With proper knowledge small-scale farmers can even have a competitive edge over the larger operations. Information and communication technologies can also play the role in encouraging the sustainable agricultural development. The traditional knowledge can be documented with the organic farming practices.

The main objective of various ICT applications is to empower the people through knowledge. This means to develop the capacity in people to achieve their objective and goals through the acquisition and use of knowledge. ICTs help people to solve their problems and improve their lives by increasing their knowledge and capacities. Through information and communication

technologies we can eradicate poverty, secure food and sustain the development. The new type of research partnerships can be opened with the ICT revolution. Now there is need to feed the research results into Agricultural and Rural Knowledge and Information Systems constituted by the researchers, extension worker, development practitioners and farmers. The information and communication technologies can play the catalytic role in agricultural and rural development but they need to be complemented with the capacity of research team to produce the quality research, interested stakeholders, networking capacity that the stakeholders can develop by sharing the knowledge and information by people's participation.

ICTs can act as the bridge between the traditional and modern systems. There is the need to pay attention on participatory research. These strategies place the farmers at the centre of research process and they can enrich their knowledge and share with one another through electronic distance education services. The online services can be provided through the information technologies. E-commerce can be used for linking the local commercial and production activities directly to the retailers. Through ICTs the farmers can ask the questions to the experts. The interaction among the researchers, extension workers

and farmers is feasible with the information technology. The farmers can get the up to date knowledge such as weather forecasting, market information, credit availability etc. through the ICTs. The block and the district officials can increase their efficiency in dissemination of information to the farmers by using the ICTs. It can be used for the creation of databases of the villagers and villages. It also provides information regarding insect-pest and disease management in the crops, information regarding rural development programmes, post harvest technology, crop insurances etc. Marketing of milk and milk products can be improved with the information technologies. The cooperative societies efficiency can be increased by using the information technologies. The agricultural research institutes can launch the websites where the latest agricultural information can be made available for the farmers and extension workers. For the overall agricultural development, the information technologies projects need to be focussed and experience gained there must be documented to draw lessons for the future. ICTs can play a significant role in marketing the agro-products and thus assist the farmers to get the price of their farm produce.

(The writer is Chief Scientist & Head of KVK Reasi SKUAST-J)