

STRENGTHENING ACTION

Jammu and Kashmir has long been grappling with the menace of drug trafficking, which has not only undermined public health but also fueled criminal activities, destabilizing the social fabric of the region. In recent years, the Jammu and Kashmir government, alongside law enforcement agencies, has intensified efforts to combat drug smuggling and its devastating impact on the youth and society at large. However, the task is immense, as the J&K's geographical proximity to international borders and its strategic location in the region make it a significant transit point for illegal drug shipments.

The drug trade in J&K has seen a disturbing rise, with narcotics such as heroin, opium, charas (cannabis), and synthetic drugs being smuggled in from neighbouring countries. These substances not only harm the physical and mental health of the youth but also contribute to rising crime rates, addiction-related diseases, and the breakdown of families. The youth, often the primary targets of drug cartels, fall prey to addiction, which in turn affects their educational and professional pursuits, perpetuating a cycle of despair and underdevelopment.

In response to the growing drug crisis, the Jammu and Kashmir government, in coordination with the Central Government, has adopted a multi-faceted approach to curb the spread of illegal drugs. Central agencies like the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), and Border Security Force (BSF), alongside local police forces, have stepped up operations to track, intercept, and dismantle drug smuggling networks.

J&K shares a long border with Pakistan, which has been a significant route for drug smuggling. To counter this, the BSF has deployed high-tech surveillance equipment such as drones, cameras, and sensors to detect suspicious activities along the border. Patrolling and vigil along these border areas have been intensified to prevent the smuggling of narcotics. Additionally, the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, often used by smugglers, is regularly monitored with increased checkpoints and surveillance.

In 2024 alone, the Jammu and Kashmir Police and Central agencies have successfully seized large quantities of heroin, charas, and synthetic drugs. A major operation in Udhampur led to the seizure of nearly 100 kg of heroin, which had been concealed in a truck coming from the Kashmir Valley. Similarly, drug peddlers operating in various districts have been arrested, and their networks are being dismantled through coordinated efforts between different law enforcement agencies. The use of canine units and drug detection technology at police checkpoints has significantly helped in identifying drug consignments.

The Jammu and Kashmir government has enacted and reinforced stringent laws to deal with drug trafficking and abuse. The Jammu and Kashmir Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act provides for severe penalties, including life imprisonment and hefty fines, for those involved in drug smuggling. The courts have also been swift in convicting drug offenders, which acts as a deterrent to would-be smugglers and peddlers.

To further enhance efforts, the Jammu and Kashmir Police must strengthen their intelligence networks and improve coordination with other state and national agencies.

A warrior, a saint, a philosopher, a poet and a Guru-Guru Gobind Singh ji

■ SURJIT SINGH FLORA

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, a warrior, a saint, a philosopher, a poet, and a Guru, was born in Patna (Bihar) at the site where Takhat Patna Sahib now stands, and he was cherished by all. He was known as Gobind Rai during his childhood.

At the age of 9, while playing with his friends, Guru ji overheard the desperate plea of the Kashmiri Pandits to Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, seeking protection from the oppression and forced conversion to Islam imposed by Aurangzeb. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji assured them that their issue would be resolved, but it necessitated the sacrifice of a saint. A saint who has never uttered a word of malice, nor committed any wrongdoing, and is perpetually absorbed in the One Lord.

Upon hearing this, Gobind Rai ji stood before him, hands joined, and head bowed, expressing deep respect for his father and Guru. He said, "Guru-pita, there is no one more holy than you on earth. You have never spoken ill of others, nor have you committed any wrongdoing, and you remain constantly immersed in thoughts of the one Lord." He asked his father why he doesn't go and sacrifice himself to save the pleading Kashmiri Pandits.

The words of the nine-year-old Gobind Rai left everyone in disbelief.

"Marhabba," Guru Teg Bahadur Ji exclaimed with joy. He embraced him warmly and expressed affection to his child, saying, "You have gained such wisdom that you are prepared to sacrifice your own father to save the Kashmiri Pandits." Guru Teg Bahadur then entrusted the Guru Gaddi to the 9-year-old Gobind Rai, marking the moment when Guru Gobind Rai ascended as the 10th Guru of Sikhism.

The contributions of Guru Gobind Singh Ji to Sikhism are diverse and significant:

In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji founded the Khalsa Panth, a revered brotherhood of baptized Sikhs, during the Vaisakhi festival at Anandpur Sahib. This event is crucial in Sikh history and signifies the establishment of the Khalsa, which was instrumental in upholding Sikh values and principles.

The Five Ks and Khalsa Identity: Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the Five Ks,



which are symbolic articles of faith, to create a unique identity for Khalsa Sikhs. The Five Ks-Kesh (uncut hair), Kara (steel bracelet), Kanga (wooden comb), Kachera (cotton undergarments), and Kirpan (sword)-represent the Khalsa's dedication to Sikh principles, discipline, and the protection of justice.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji demonstrated remarkable foresight and exceptional leadership throughout his life. His skill in foreseeing challenges and offering solutions, both in spiritual and military contexts, is clear in his establishment of the Khalsa and his conduct during battles against oppression.

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh Ji acknowledged the necessity for a lasting spiritual leader for the Sikh community and proclaimed Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. He granted Guruship to the scripture, confirming that it would serve as the everlasting guiding light for Sikhs, highlighting a distinctive and forward-thinking element of Sikh spiritual leadership.

Literary Contributions: Guru Gobind Singh Ji was both a military leader and a prolific poet and writer. His compositions in the Dasam Granth and other writings showcase his exceptional poetic talent and profound philosophical insight. His literary contribu-

tions feature the renowned "Chandi Di Var" and "Zafarnama."

The lasting legacy of Guru Gobind Singh Ji is rooted not only in his martial courage but also in his deep spirituality. His teachings highlighted the importance of seeking justice, promoting equality, and defending one's faith, all while fostering a profound relationship with the divine.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji's insightful vision, transformative initiatives, and proclamation of Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the Eternal Guru highlight his dedication to Sikh values and the welfare of the Sikh community. His life and teachings continue to inspire Sikhs around the globe, and he is a highly respected figure in Sikh history.

Gurji existed in physical form for just 42 years, yet his life was rich with events, courage, and triumph. Despite enduring the loss of his father, mother, and four children, as well as relinquishing his fort, he confronted Mughal Aurangzeb directly. He composed a letter titled "Zafarnama," which translates to "letter of victory" (Zafar - victory, Nama - letter).

At the age of 19, he engaged in 13 significant battles, first against the Pahari Rajas and later against the Mughals, with or without alliances, starting with Bhim Chand of Kahlu. We commemorate his anniversary to serve as a beacon for humanity, illustrating how our guru stood resolutely against oppression, sacrificing himself and his entire family for our sake. He taught that committing injustice is a crime, but tolerating injustice is an even greater crime. Anandpur Sahib, located in the Rupnagar district, is a sacred site for Sikhs, linked to the 10th Sikh Guru. It is in close proximity to Kiratpur, which is associated with the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Sikh Gurus.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji stands as the tenth Sikh guru, holding a place of great reverence and respect within the Sikh community. Numerous beliefs and narratives exist regarding his life and teachings, including the following:

He was a noble figure who battled against oppression and injustice. Guru Gobind Singh Ji is recognized for his courage and military skill, inspiring his followers to resist tyranny

and oppression. He founded the Khalsa, a community of devoted and committed Sikhs who were focused on maintaining the values of justice and equality.

He held a strong conviction in the unity of God: Guru Gobind Singh Ji imparted the teaching that there is but one God, and that all religions serve as pathways to the same ultimate truth. He highlighted the significance of love, compassion, and serving others as a pathway to attaining spiritual enlightenment.

He had faith in the strength of the individual: Guru Gobind Singh Ji inspired his followers to cultivate their inner resilience and to advocate for their beliefs. He held the conviction that each individual possesses the capacity for greatness, and that it is through self-discipline, meditation, and devotion that one can attain spiritual liberation.

He recognized the significance of community: Guru Gobind Singh Ji highlighted the value of unity and support among Sikhs. He inspired his followers to collaborate in creating a fair and just society, urging them to stand by each other during challenging times.

He held a deep conviction in the principle of seva, or selfless service, as taught by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who emphasized that serving others is a core element of spiritual practice. He inspired his followers to participate in acts of kindness, generosity, and service to others as a way to demonstrate their devotion to God.

The beliefs and teachings persist in inspiring and guiding Sikh communities globally, with Guru Gobind Singh Ji being honoured as a spiritual leader and visionary who devoted his life to serving others.

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh was assassinated while he endeavoured to create harmony with Emperor Bahadur Shah. He created a considerable collection of writings, and his most important contribution to Sikh tradition is his instruction to his disciples to view the Guru Granth Sahib (the compilation of writings from the earlier Gurus) as their everlasting Guru. This text will act as the cornerstone for the Gurus' teachings, shaping all future decisions.

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

World Braille Day: Empowering the Visually Impaired in J&K through reforms

■ AARYAN SHARMA

World Braille Day, observed annually on January 4, celebrates the groundbreaking invention of Louis Braille, which revolutionized education and communication for visually impaired individuals. Beyond commemorating this milestone, the day serves as a critical reminder to address the social, educational, and legal barriers faced by visually impaired people, particularly in regions like Jammu & Kashmir.

Visual Impairment in Jammu & Kashmir: A Legal Perspective

J&K has a significant prevalence of vision-related disabilities, compounded by limited healthcare access, delayed diagnoses, and insufficient awareness. While various laws exist to support differently-abled individuals, their implementation in J&K often remains inconsistent due to systemic inefficiencies and socio-political challenges.

Key Legal Frameworks Supporting Visually Impaired Individuals

1. **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**

This comprehensive legislation recognizes 21 categories of disabilities, including blindness and low

vision, and mandates:

► **Education Rights:** Free education for children with disabilities up to 18 years, along with accessible learning materials.

► **Employment Quotas:** Reservation of 4% of government jobs for individuals with disabilities, including 1% specifically for those with vision impairments.

► **Barrier-Free Accessibility:** Public infrastructure must integrate Braille signage, ramps, and assistive technologies.

Challenges in J&K:

► Despite the RPwD Act's extension to J&K post-abrogation of Article 370, enforcement has been slow. Many educational institutions lack accessible facilities, and employers fail to meet mandated quotas. Limited resources and inadequate teacher training further hinder progress, leaving many visually impaired students unsupported.

► The region's challenging topography and underdeveloped infrastructure have limited the campaign's reach, leaving many rural areas inaccessible to the visually impaired.

2. **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

The NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusivity for children with disabilities, proposing provisions for special educators, assistive devices, and flexible curricula to address the needs of visually impaired learners.

3. **The Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)**

Launched in 2015, this initiative aims to make public spaces, transportation, and digital platforms accessible for persons with disabilities.

4. **The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992**

This act sets guidelines for training professionals working with disabled populations. However, J&K faces a shortage of trained professionals, restricting access to essential services like Braille education and rehabilitation.

Education and Employment: Gaps and Barriers

► **Inadequate Enforcement:** Schools especially in rural areas often lack Braille materials, trained teachers, and assistive devices.

► **Non-Compliance with Accessibility Standards:** Many rural schools fail to meet prescribed accessibility norms.

In Employment:

► **Poor Implementation of Reservation Policies:**

The mandated 4% job reservation for disabled individuals under the RPwD Act is rarely enforced.

► **Lack of Awareness among Employers:** Many employers in J&K are unaware of legal incentives such as tax benefits and subsidies for hiring individuals with disabilities.

The Way Forward: Strengthening Legal and Institutional Support

1. **Effective Implementation of the RPwD Act**

► Regular audits of educational institutions and workplaces to ensure compliance with accessibility norms.

► Strict penalties for non-compliance by public and private institutions.

2. **Improved Monitoring and Accountability**

► Establish local grievance redressal mechanisms for visually impaired individuals to report violations.

► Set up a dedicated disability commission in J&K to oversee law implementation.

3. **Incentivizing Accessibility**

► Offer subsidies and tax benefits to schools, colleges, and employers investing in accessible infrastructure and assistive technologies.

4. **Increased Training and Awareness**

► Train educators and administrators in inclusive teaching practices.

► Conduct awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and highlight the potential of visually impaired individuals.

5. **Enhancing Support Programs**

► Expand the Accessible India Campaign to rural and underserved areas of J&K.

► Provide financial assistance for assistive technologies like screen readers, Braille displays, and mobility aids.

A Call to Action

World Braille Day is a powerful reminder of the need for equal opportunities and inclusivity. Strengthening legal frameworks and ensuring their effective implementation is vital to creating an environment where visually impaired individuals in J&K can thrive.

Laws alone are not enough; they must translate into tangible action. Through a collective effort by the government, private sector, and civil society, we can honor Louis Braille's legacy and work towards a future where no one is left behind.

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Role of KVKs in Human Resource Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Human resource development is very important for addressing the challenges in sustaining the agricultural production and productivity in different agro-ecological regions.

Human resources constitute the most critical inputs relying on the science and technology for the development. Agriculture being the backbone of the Indian economy, the human resource needs to mitigate various activities related to agricultural development which is critical to attain country's goals towards rural development, employment generation leading to sustainable growth and development. The agricultural sector has made significant strides in the last six decades and the country has transformed its position from the net importer to surplus for the export. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) also known as Farm Science Centers are the agricultural knowledge providing centres from where the farmers can obtain latest agricultural information and assistance to solve their day-to-day agricultural problems. These centres act as means of transfer of new agricultural information and technologies from lab to land. Many Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) collaborate with these centres to disseminate the information to the farming community. Needless to say that these centres act as the nodal agencies of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and are playing a crucial role in the implementation of modern agricultural technologies. The

KVKs are bringing the modern package of agricultural technologies at the farmers' doorsteps. The KVKs are mitigating the scientific agricultural needs of the farmers. The KVKs are playing a pivotal role in transformation in rural areas by creating the awareness among the rural people about the latest agricultural technologies. The KVKs are playing a pivotal role in farmers' prosperity. The KVKs empower the farmers through need-based farmers/vocational trainings and helpful to change the socio-economic conditions of the farmers. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras conduct on-farm testing, identify the location specificity of agricultural technologies, lay out front line demonstrations to establish the production potential of various agricultural technologies at farmers fields, impart need-based and skill oriented training for the farmers, in-service extensional personnel, to those who are interested for self-employment to update their knowledge and skills in new agricultural technologies, create awareness on improved technologies through various extension methods, produce and provide improved quality seeds, planting material, livestock, poultry, fisheries etc. to the farmers and work as agricultural knowledge centers for the public, private and voluntary organizations.

The KVKs cater the needs of those who wish to be self-employed or those who are already employed. The programmes and syllabus(action plan) of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras are tailored according to the needs, resources

and potential for the agricultural growth in a particular area and are finally decided by involving the districts heads, Panches/Sarpanches and also progressive farmers of the area.

The major objective of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras is agricultural growth. Priority is given to the weaker sections of the society like small, marginal, tribal farmers, agricultural labourers, drought prone areas, hilly areas, forest areas, coastal areas etc. and work-experience is the main method of imparting training. With E-linkage the KVKs are interconnected with each other and also with the ICAR and thus disseminate the agricultural information to the end users quickly and effectively. With the introduction of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) the adoption rates of new agricultural technologies have been increased. KVKs aware the farmers about the hybrid/improved/high yielding varieties of maize, paddy, wheat, pulses, oilseeds etc. KVKs are diverting the farmers from subsistence farming to commercial farming. Mushroom cultivation, sericulture, floriculture, horticulture, dairy farming, vermicomposting, food processing, milk processing entrepreneurship are developed among the farmers by the strenuous efforts of KVKs. KVKs are proving as the agricultural knowledge hubs for the farmers.

The first objective of ICAR is to cover the entire country with one Krishi Vigyan Kendra in each district and priority is given to the backward areas. As there is a great

demand for the improved agricultural technologies by the farmers so there is great demand of Krishi Vigyan Kendras throughout the country.

Farmers need not only the knowledge of the technologies but also more skills in the agricultural operations for adoption. Now the effectiveness of Krishi Vigyan Kendras has been increased by the addition of On-Farm Trials (OFTs) and Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) on the agricultural technologies.

The four major functions of Krishi Vigyan Kendras are (i) To impart need based trainings to the farmers and extension functionaries. (ii) To organise long-term vocational training for the rural youths in order to generate the income and self-employment. (iii) To layout Front-Line Demonstrations (FLDs) at farmers field to generate the production data and also to get feedback from the farmers. (iv) To conduct On-Farm Tests (OFTs), refinement and documentation of agricultural technologies. Needs based trainings are designed for different types of farmers.

The training courses are designed on the basis of information received from village survey through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) methods and characterise the human and physical resources. The farming system of the farmers is taken into account while designing the courses of the programmes.

All methods and means to develop the skill among the farmers in their areas of interest are taken into account. Basically the trainings

starts from the farmers production units such as farmers fields, dairy units, poultry units, goat units, sheep units etc. and conclude with discussion. After imparting the trainings the follow-up of the programmes is done and impact is assessed by the KVK scientists. No certificate or diploma is awarded to the farmers for the trainings. Krishi Vigyan Kendra plans and conducts survey of the operational areas to identify the training needs of the farmers. It compiles all the recommendations for the district to utilize in the training programmes.

KVK conducts need-based, production oriented short and long-term training courses both on and off campus.

KVK maintains the farm on the scientific basis for the demonstration purpose in order to provide the work experience to the farmers and also to disseminate the latest agricultural technologies.

The seed produced by the KVKs are ultimately provided to the farmers. KVK also imparts some general training to the rural illiterates and school drop outs in order to convert them as the good farmers. KVK also provides trainings to the women for home making and nutrition education for rural community and also on other areas like cottage industries home crafts etc. The women empowerment is always taken on the priority and they are guided to form and manage the SHGs.

KVK helps to implement all the schemes of the ICAR and other related organisations. KVK demonstrates the various technologies to recommend for their adoption for maximizing the yield or income per unit time in different resource conditions. Presently India is having 731 KVKs all over the country.

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu) is also having its nine Krishi Vigyan Kendras which are catering the agricultural needs of the farmers of Jammu province.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Reasi has established crop cafeteria, hydroponics unit, hatchery unit, mushroom unit, vermicompost unit, green shade net house/polyhouse unit, fruit orchards, natural farming unit etc. for the demonstration purpose and farmers from different areas used to visit there to upgrade themselves in agricultural technologies. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras are proving to be the tools of rural transformation.

They are really serving as the agricultural technology resource and knowledge centres, supporting the public, private and voluntary sectors for strengthening the agricultural economy. By adopting a holistic approach that balances the productivity with sustainability and income generation, KVKs can continue to serve as the engines of rural change, driving resilient agricultural development in the years to come.

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