"I dream of an India that is prosperous, strong and caring. An India, that regains a place of honour in the comity of great nations."
-Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Sahkar DigiPay

The launch of Sahkar DigiPay marks a significant step in India's ongoing journey towards inclusive digital transformation. Envisioned under the broader vision of "Sahkar se Samriddhi" (Prosperity through Cooperation), Sahkar DigiPay seeks to empower the cooperative sector by bringing it firmly into the digital payments ecosystem. At a time when fintech innovation is rapidly reshaping financial behaviour, this initiative addresses a long-standing gap by enabling cooperatives-especially at the grassroots level-to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

India's cooperative sector is vast and diverse, encompassing primary agricultural credit societies (PACS), dairy cooperatives, fisheries, handloom units, and housing societies. These institutions serve millions, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, yet many have remained dependent on cash-based transactions and manual accounting. Sahkar DigiPay directly tackles this challenge by offering a secure, interoperable digital payment platform tailored specifically to the needs of cooperatives. By enabling services such as UPI payments, Aadhaar-enabled payment systems, micro-ATM services, and direct benefit transfers, the platform promises to modernise day-to-day financial operations.

One of the most important strengths of Sahkar DigiPay lies in its financial inclusion potential. For small farmers, self-help groups, and cooperative members who often lack access to advanced banking infrastructure, the platform can reduce dependency on middlemen, ensure timely payments, and enhance transparency. Digitisation of transactions also helps build a financial trail, improving creditworthiness and enabling easier access to institutional finance. In this sense, Sahkar DigiPay is not merely a technological tool but a catalyst for economic empowerment.

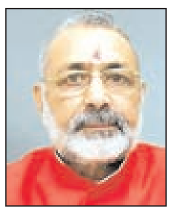
Transparency and accountability are additional benefits. Digital payments reduce leakages, curb corruption, and simplify audits within cooperatives, many of which have struggled with governance and trust issues. By standardising payment processes, Sahkar DigiPay can help restore confidence in cooperative institutions and make them more resilient and professionally managed. This aligns well with the government's broader reforms aimed at revitalising cooperatives as engines of local development.

However, the success of Sahkar DigiPay will depend on effective implementation. Digital literacy remains uneven, particularly among elderly members and in remote areas with limited connectivity. Without adequate training, handholding, and infrastructure support, the platform risks becoming underutilised. Cybersecurity and data protection are also critical concerns; cooperatives must be equipped to safeguard sensitive financial data and prevent fraud.

Another challenge lies in integration. Sahkar DigiPay must seamlessly work with existing banking systems, state cooperative structures, and national digital platforms. Coordination between central agencies, state governments, and cooperative bodies will be essential to avoid duplication and ensure uniform adoption.

India's New Global Positioning in Textiles

SHRI GIRIRAJ SINGH



When we speak of India's textile sector, we are not merely referring to factories, machines and fashion. We are talking about the lives of millions of Indians whose daily reality is rooted in cotton fields, handlooms, powerlooms and sewing machines.

Over the last 11 years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the sector has witnessed a strategic vision, strong resolve and bold policy reforms. These efforts have infused new confidence into the textile industry. Today, the impact of recent reforms is not just structural change. It is a story of new opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs, women, weavers, technicians and the youth. It is a collective mission to position India as a global textile powerhouse. This article is not a list of schemes, but a reflection of the transformation we have built together.

Farmer-Centric Transformation: Record Cotton Procurement and Historic MSP Increase

The foundation of the textile sector lies in the fields, and farmers are the first link in this value chain. Ensuring that cotton farmers are protected from market fluctuations, price uncertainty and exploitative intermediaries has always been a top priority.

This is why, between 2004 and 2014, government agencies procured a totalof173lakhcottonbales.But between 2014 and 2024, this figure rose to 473 lakh bales, an increase of 173%. This demonstrates that the government has moved beyond seasonal procurement and provided farmers a system of sustained security.

Similarly, major reforms in MSP have given farmers long-term stability. Cotton MSP, which stood at Rs 3,700 per quintal in 2013-14, has been raised to Rs 7,710 per quintal for 2025-26 an increase of 108%, strengthening the income, confidence and security of cotton growers.

When we say the farmer is protected, it is not a slogan. These numbers reflect a genuine guarantee that the government is procuring more cotton than ever before and ensuring a remunerative price for farmers.

Mission for Cotton Productivity: Quality, Productivity and New-Age Fibres

Higher production is not enough, global competitiveness demands better quality. With this mission, the government launched the ₹2,500 crore Mission for Cotton Productivity, aimed not only at increasing production but enhancing cotton quality to international standards.

Themissionfocusesonimprovedseeds,scientificcultivation,farmmanagementandenhanced quality-control systems. Farmers are being encouraged to adopt new-age fibres so that India can emerge as a major global supplier of high-quality cotton and blended fibres.

The future of thetextileindustrywillnotdependsolelyontraditionalfibres.Thegovernmenthasprioritised new-age fibres such as flax, ramies is a land milkweed all of which offer low input costs and higher returns. These fibres will open new avenues for processing industries, create large-scale jobs and strengthen the value chain. Milkweed, in particular, is emerging as a promising new-age textile fibre and will soon become an important additional income source for farmers.

Cotton Import Duty Relief: Stability for Industry and Global Competitiveness

The removal of import duty on cotton has provided immediate relief to the industry. Initially applicable only till 30 September, the deadline was extended till 31 December, considering its positive impact. Textile mills can now access cotton at globally competitive prices, reducing yarn and fabric production costs. This directly enhances India's competitiveness in international export markets.

For SMEs, this move is especially significant as it provides cost stability, better planning and improved financial management. The domestic market too benefits from increased raw cotton availability, ensuring affordable, high-quality fibre for handloom, power loom, designer segments and fabric-based startups. This decision positions India as a stable and competitive global manufacturing hub.

Industrial Acceleration Through PLI: A New Era for Textile Manufacturing

The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme has energized the textile sector, creating an enabling environment for unprecedented investment. In response to industry demand, the application portal has been reopened till 31 December 2025, and 27 new applications have already been received.

These investments will create new factories, advanced technologies and thousands of jobs, significantly contributing towards India's goal of achieving $12 billion textile exports by 2030. Of the 74 approved companies,42 are in technical textiles, signaling India's deep commitment to this innovation-driven sector. Technical textile exports have grown by 12.4% over the previous year, reaching $3.2-3.4billion.Anotable highlight - the top 10 companies have collectively invested Rs 4,584 crore, exceeding their committed investment by more than Rs 500 crore.

One of the most compelling success stories is that of baby diapers and sanitary napkins. Once heavily dependent on imports, India is now moving confidently towards becoming a net exporter in this category thanks to PLI-driven industrial expansion.

Relief to MMF Value Chain: QCO Removed from MEG and Viscose

The decision to remove Quality Control Orders (QCO) on MEG and viscose was made after carefully evaluating industry needs and global supply chain realities. Post-QCO removal, the MMF (man-made fibre) value chain now has access to raw materials at globally competitive prices, improving production planning as well as cost-efficiency. The downstream sector, especially garmenting, receives immediate relief. This segment currently employs 1.4 crore people, and the goal is to create1crore additional jobs by 2030.

Next Gen GST Reform: Relief from Inverted Duty Structure

The textile industry had long demanded correction of the inverted duty structure, which locked up working capital. Next Gen GST reforms have finally addressed this issue. A major decision was also taken to reduce GST to 5% on apparel price dup to Rs 2,500,makinggarmentsmoreaffordable-forthemiddleclass, youth and students. This will also boost demand across Tier 2-3 towns and rural markets.

Labour Reforms: Security and Dignity for Textile Workers

A large proportion of textile workers are women, migrants and contract labourers. Recent labour reforms guarantee equal wages, access to welfare schemes and improved working conditions. These reforms will ensure dignity, safety and stability for the textile workforce.

PMMITRA Parks: Integrated Value Chains and 21 Lakh Jobs

The PM MITRA scheme is a game-changer. These parks are not merely industrial clusters, they are the seven energy hubs of India's textile sector. Land allocation across seven states is complete, and work is progressing smoothly. The parks have already attracted Rs 33,000 crore in investment and are expected to generate 21 lakh jobs.

FTAs and New Global Markets: Expanding India's Export Footprint

When the Ministry of Textiles was taken over in June 2024, it was clear that India relied too heavily on a few traditional markets. The directive was to identify emerging global markets and study demand patterns and per capita incomes. As a result, 40 new markets were identified markets where India had minimal presence but immense potential.

Today, India is entering these regions confidently through FTAs with 27 countries. The recent CETA agreement with the UK is a prime example. Its impact was immediate, with India's exports to the UK increasing by $15million between April 2024 and 2025.Similarly,theIndia-EFTA Agreement opens doors to a premium market worth nearly $14 billion.

In just one year, India's textile exports grew in 111 countries with exports rising over 50% in 38 countries and 25-50% in 16 countries. The most remarkable success story is Argentina, once considered a challenging market, where Indian exports recorded a 73% increase.

India's Textile Sector is Now a Pillar of National Strength

Together, these efforts reflect a simple truth. India's textile sector is no longer just an industry. It has become one of the engines of national growth. The sector stands today with renewed confidence and the capability to lead global competition. Our goal is clear - To make India a trusted, modern and sustainable global textile hub of the future.

(The author is Union Minister of Textiles)

PRADHAN MANTRI VIDYALAXMI (PM-Vidyalaxmi)

DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

Education today has become unaffordable especially for students coming from resource poor families. As a result their dreams of acquiring higher education get shattered. Unable to fulfill their aspirations and desires, they run the risk of landing in various activities which might be socially unacceptable. When the energy of youths is not channelized in a positive direction, they cannot contribute to the development of their societies and instead become a burden on the society. India now holds the distinction of having the largest percentage of youth in total population of the country. As such, it becomes urgent and mandatory on the part of the government to ensure that no youth of the country is deprived of the opportunities to accomplish their goals merely due to financial constraints. To take care of higher education needs of youths, the government of the country has come up with the 'Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi' scheme. The Union Cabinet on November 06, 2024 approved 'Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi' (PM-Vidyalaxmi) as a Central Sector Scheme to financial support meritorious students so that financial constraints do not prevent any youth of country from pursuing quality higher education. Initially, the scheme allowed students to avail loan facilities for pursuing graduate and post graduate degrees/diplomas from 860 Quality Higher Educational Institutes (QHEIs) across the country. Now the no. of such QHEIs has increased to 904. Vidyalaxmi, infact has been started as a mission mode mechanism will facilitate and drive the extension of education loans to meritorious students who get admission in the top quality Higher Educational Institutions (QHEIs) of the nation, translating to covering more than 22 lakh students every year.

Students admitted through open competitive examinations/merit based admission shall get this loan. Students admitted through management quota (or similar quota) will not be eligible. Students of all family income groups will be eligible to avail this credit facility. There is no ceiling on the maximum loan amount. It will depend on course fee and other fees charged by the QHEI and other associated expenses which will include expenses incurred on mess, hostel fee, other refundable and non-refundable fees of the QHEI, cost of a reasonable quality laptop and reasonable amount of living expenses required by the student during the entire course period. Bank may take life insurance cover of the student borrower if the loan amount is above certain threshold, to be decided by individual banks. As per request of the borrower, the insurance premium can be included in the education loan amount. The repayment period of the education loan would be up to 15 years excluding moratorium period (Course period + 1 year). Furthermore, for students with up to Rs. 8 lakhs annual family income, the scheme will also provide for 3% interest subvention on loans up to Rs 10 lakh. If education loan amount is more than ₹ 10 lakhs, interest subvention shall be provided for disbursed total principal amount of loan up to ₹ 10 lakhs only; 3% Interest subvention shall be provided for interest accrued on outstanding education loan during moratorium period.

This is in addition to the full interest subvention already offered to students with up to Rs. 4.5 lakhs annual family income. PM Vidyalaxmi will build on the scope and reach of initiatives taken over the last decade for maximizing access to quality higher education for the youth. For Banks to expand coverage loan amounts up to ₹ 7.5 lakhs will be provided a 75% credit guarantee by the Government of India.

Students availing any other Central /State Government Scholarship or any other interest subvention scheme or Fee reimbursement shall not be eligible for availing benefits under this Also interest subvention and credit guarantee under this scheme shall not be available to those students who discontinue their course midstream, or who are expelled from the Institution on disciplinary or academic grounds. However, Interest subvention and credit guarantee would be available only if discontinuation is due to medical grounds for which necessary documentation to the satisfaction of the Head of educational institution needs to be provided.

As far as criteria for eligibility for an institute to be recognized as QHEIs is concerned, it should be in the top 100 ranked HEIs in the overall/category-specific and/or domain specific rankings in latest list of NIRF published by the Ministry of Education; or in the top 200 ranked HEIs under the governance of state/UT governments in the latest list of NIRF published by the Ministry of Education and all remaining HEIs under the governance of Government of India. Indian campus of foreign education institutions, foreign campus of Indian education institutions and foreign education institutions will not be covered under PM Vidyalaxmi. For ensuring equitable inter-state representation, all-India slots will be distributed across States based on population. If enough applications do not come from a State/UT, vacant slots shall be redistributed among remaining states on pro-rata basis. The interest rates charged on the educational loan shall be capped at individual bank's Externally Benchmarked Lending Rate (EBLR) + 0.5%. In all cases, interest rate charged for loans under PM-Vidyalaxmi shall be less than the interest rate charged by the bank.

After the moratorium period, entire interest on the outstanding loan amount shall be paid by the student according to the loan agreement with the bank which gave the education loan. For all the education loans of quality HEIs, there is a unified portal for loan application, which will be under the administrative control of the Department of Higher Education. Once the education loan is sanctioned by the banks and disbursed, the banks will update the same in the portal seamlessly. If any information submitted by the bank or the student is found to be incorrect at a future date, the student will be liable to refund the entire subsidy claim paid to her/ him. The lending bank will be responsible for recovery of this amount. In case of such detection; the student shall be debarred from any future benefit from any other government scheme. In addition, other legal procedures, as applicable under laws of the land might be initiated against such a student.

(The author writes on agricultural and social issues)

How Career Management shapes success in the modern economy

MOHAMMAD HANIEF

The world of work has undergone a profound transformation over the past decade, reshaped by rapid technological change, global economic shifts, and evolving employee expectations. In today's dynamic environment, the concept of a "job for life" has all but disappeared. A career can no longer be seen as a predictable, linear ascent up a single organisational ladder. Instead, it has become a fluid journey marked by transitions across roles, sectors, and even professions. As artificial intelligence, automation, and digital tools redefine the skills required in nearly every field, individuals must proactively manage their careers to remain relevant and resilient.

Career management, therefore, has emerged as a critical skill-not just for employees, but for organisations striving to build a capable, agile workforce. Effective career management enables individuals to understand their strengths, set meaningful goals, and pursue opportunities that align with both personal aspirations and market realities. For employers, supporting this process is no longer optional; it has become an essential component of talent retention, workforce development, and long-term organisational success.

In the current scenario, where AI-driven technologies are reshaping workflow patterns and creating new roles at an unprecedented pace, professionals are required to continuously update their capabilities. The half-life of skills is shrinking, making lifelong learning an indispensable part of career progression. At the same time, hybrid work models, flexible employment arrangements, and remote collaboration tools have redefined how employees engage with their organisations. These factors collectively underscore the need for a strategic approach to career management-one that is both personalised and adaptive.

At the heart of effective career management lies self-awareness. Understanding one's strengths, interests, areas for improvement, and long-term ambitions is the foundation upon which all career decisions are built. This requires regular reflection and a willingness to reassess priorities as circumstances evolve. In a competitive job market where employers look for individuals who can adapt quickly, self-awareness becomes a powerful tool for navigating change. It allows individuals to identify skill gaps early and seek opportunities-such as training programmes, certifications, or mentorship-to enhance their employability.

The modern career path is no longer defined by vertical mobility alone. Increasingly, lateral moves, cross-functional experiences, and project-based assignments are considered valuable. These "tours of duty," as some leadership thinkers describe them, allow employees to experiment with new roles, expand their capabilities, and build diverse professional portfolios. This shift reflects a broader change in how careers are conceptualised: rather than climbing a rigid ladder, professionals now develop their careers like a lattice, branching into new directions as opportunities arise.

For organisations, this shift poses both challenges and opportunities. Leadership must cultivate an environment that supports learning, collaboration, and growth across all levels of the workforce. A modern workplace is not just a physical space; it is an ecosystem that encourages innovation, networking, and the exchange of ideas. Smart workplace designs-featuring flexible working zones, technology-enabled collaboration tools, and spaces that promote both focus and interaction-play a critical role in driving employee engagement. More importantly, a culture that values continuous learning and supports career exploration helps retain top talent

in an era where employees often move across companies in search of better opportunities.

Enhancing the employee experience has become a central priority for forward-thinking organisations. Today's workforce-particularly younger employees-place strong emphasis on meaning, purpose, and well-being in their careers. They are drawn to organisations with strong employer branding, inclusive cultures, and workplaces that support a healthy integration of professional and personal life. Small but thoughtful interventions-such as flexible working hours, wellness initiatives, access to mentors, and opportunities for career conversations-can significantly strengthen employees' sense of belonging and commitment. These elements contribute not only to operational efficiency but also to cultivating a workplace that is ready for the future.

Career management involves a structured process of setting both short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals often focus on immediate actions-such as improving competency in a specific skill or seeking a new project assignment-while long-term goals may relate to reaching leadership positions, transitioning to a new sector, or achieving advanced qualifications. Using the SMART approach (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based) helps ensure that these goals are concrete and achievable. Flexibility is equally important, as evolving industry trends may require adjustments in direction.

Career planning, which forms a key part of career management, is typically a shared responsibility between employees and their supervisors. Employees assess their current capabilities, identify areas of growth, and express their interests, while supervisors help align these aspirations with organisational needs and available opportunities. This collaborative approach ensures that career decisions are informed, strategic, and mutually beneficial.

Another essential component of career management is the establishment of career paths within organisations. A well-defined career path provides employees with a roadmap of potential progression, highlighting the skills, experiences, and milestones required to move forward. Modern organisations increasingly recognise the importance of transparent, structured development pathways to attract talent and encourage employees to envision long-term futures within the company. These pathways not only motivate employees but also strengthen succession planning and organisational stability.

Despite hard work and dedication, employees may sometimes struggle to meet their career expectations. In such cases, identifying skill gaps becomes critical. Through targeted training, mentorship, and development programmes, employees can enhance their capabilities and position themselves for future opportunities. Organisations that offer robust development initiatives-such as leadership training, technical upskilling, or cross-functional exposure-empower employees to grow while simultaneously strengthening their own talent pipeline.

Occupational management programmes benefit both employees and employers. They align personal aspirations with organisational goals, helping create a motivated workforce capable of meeting emerging challenges. With a strategic approach to career management, companies can improve employee performance, increase productivity, and cultivate a culture of accountability and growth. These programmes also allow organisations to reassess workplace structures and improve processes to ensure they support continuous learning and performance excellence.

While often used interchangeably, career management and career development are distinct but complementary concepts. Career management provides the broader framework-a strategic approach that guides decisions and shapes long-term direction. It is the planning process through which individuals design their professional journey. Career development, by contrast, involves the specific actions taken to advance within that framework. These may include pursuing additional education, acquiring technical skills, participating in mentorship programmes, or taking on challenging assignments. The interplay between management and development ensures that professionals remain adaptable and capable of thriving in a constantly evolving environment.

Ultimately, career management is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process. In a world marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation, those who take charge of their careers-by continuously learning, adapting, and planning-are best positioned to achieve long-term success. Organisations that support this journey not only strengthen their workforce but also build a culture of resilience and innovation that is essential for competing in the modern economy.

(The author is a senior analyst)