

DIGITAL PRIVACY

The blooming paradise on Earth

In an era defined by digital transformation, the intersection of digital privacy and national security has emerged as one of the most pressing and debated topics worldwide. The unprecedented connectivity offered by the internet, coupled with the growing dependency on digital platforms, has brought convenience and innovation, but it has also introduced significant challenges. Striking a balance between individual privacy and the collective need for national security is crucial.

Digital privacy refers to the protection of personal data, communication, and online activities from unauthorized access or misuse. With the proliferation of smartphones, social media, e-commerce, and cloud storage, vast amounts of sensitive personal information are stored online. While this digital ecosystem has transformed how individuals and businesses operate, it has also made them vulnerable to cyberattacks, surveillance, and data breaches.

Individuals are increasingly demanding control over their data, leading to the implementation of privacy laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States.

While digital privacy is a fundamental right, national security is a paramount concern for any country. National security refers to the protection of a nation's sovereignty, citizens, and infrastructure from external and internal threats. In today's interconnected world, digital threats such as cyberterrorism, hacking, misinformation campaigns, and ransomware attacks have become critical security challenges.

Governments around the globe invest heavily in cybersecurity and surveillance programs to prevent terrorism, cybercrimes, and other threats to national security. Advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and biometric systems are employed to monitor and analyze potential threats in real-time. Agencies argue that accessing digital data is necessary to preempt and thwart criminal activities, particularly in cases involving terrorism and organized crime.

Governments must establish clear, transparent, and accountable laws that outline the scope and limitations of surveillance programs. Judicial oversight and periodic reviews can ensure that these programs do not overreach.

Robust data protection laws that safeguard personal information while allowing access for legitimate security purposes can create a balance. These laws should include provisions for data minimization and user consent.

Encryption is a cornerstone of digital privacy, but it can also hinder security efforts. Developing encryption mechanisms that protect user data while allowing access in exceptional cases, under strict legal frameworks, could address this challenge.

Governments, technology companies, and civil society must collaborate to develop policies that respect privacy without compromising security.

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



Asia's largest tulip garden, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar, is gearing up to host the spectacular Tulip Festival 2025, promising a dazzling display of nature's finest blooms. Set against the stunning backdrop of the Zabarwan Range and overlooking the serene Dal Lake, this annual extravaganza is expected to draw thousands of tourists and flower enthusiasts from across India and beyond.

The Tulip Festival, a breathtaking showcase of beauty, culture, and history is held every April at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, the festival transforms Asia's largest tulip garden into a mesmerizing sea of colors. Beyond its floral splendor, the festival is a celebration of Kashmiri heritage, offering visitors a unique opportunity to experience the region's vibrant culture through traditional music, folk dances, and authentic Kashmiri cuisine.

Imagine strolling through a vibrant sea of tulips, their vivid colors stretching endlessly, framed by the majestic Zabarwan Hills on one side and the serene Dal Lake on the other. Every year, from late March to mid-April, this floral paradise opens its doors, transforming Kashmir into a mesmerizing rainbow dreamscape.

Preparations are in full swing for the Srinagar Tulip Festival 2025, which promises to be bigger and more spectacular than ever. Soon, thousands of tourists from around the world will flock to Asia's largest tulip garden to witness one of nature's most breathtaking displays. Whether you're a nature enthusiast, photography lover, or simply seeking a peaceful retreat, this festival is an experience like no other.

Spread across 55 hectares, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden is home to 1.7 million tulip bulbs, meticulously planted in phases to extend the blooming season. This means visitors are greeted with a fresh burst of colours every few days.



But tulips aren't the only attraction, the garden also features daffodils, hyacinths, and ranunculus, each adding their own vibrant hues and delicate fragrances to the landscape. Surrounding almond and apricot trees bloom at the same time, enhancing the magical setting and making the entire scene look straight out of a fairy tale. With its breathtaking floral landscapes, Kashmir's tulip garden is often compared to the famous tulip fields of Holland but with the added charm of the Himalayan backdrop.

But this festival is more than just a visual treat. It's an immersive experience that allows visitors to connect with Kashmir's vibrant traditions. As you walk through the garden the air is filled with the rhythmic beats of Kashmiri folk music, artisans showcase their handwoven treasures, including intricate Pashmina shawls and the scent of spiced Kahwa invites you to indulge in authentic Kashmiri flavors.

As the largest Tulip Garden of Asia, it is home to about 73 varieties of Tulip flower and 46 varieties of other flowers such as other spring flowers are hyacinths, daffodils, muscari, and cyclamens, would also be on display to add variety to the garden's colors and flowers. The

entire garden covers an area of 30 hectares with long-stretched fields, parks and terraces. The Tulip Garden is an epitome of natural beauty and is frequently visited by tourists from all over the world. The spring season in Kashmir marks the opening of the garden.

Preparations are in full swing at Asia's largest Tulip Garden, formerly known as SirajBagh, will be open to visitors later this month when the tulip bulbs start to bloom. The Floriculture department plants the tulip bulbs in a phased manner so that the flowers remain in the garden for a month or more.

The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden was established by then-Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad in 2007 to extend the tourist season in Jammu and Kashmir, which was previously limited to summers and winters. The garden started on a small scale with 50,000 tulip bulbs imported from Holland. It quickly gained popularity among tourists and has steadily grown each year, both in terms of the number of visitors and the tulips that bloom there.

More than 4.65 lakh visitors, both domestic and foreign, visited the garden last year, while in 2023, it saw a footfall of 3.65 lakh people. The tulips are planted in rows and each row

has a different variety of tulip. In addition to tulips, many other species of flowers are also there, including hyacinths, daffodils and ranunculus. This garden also has a number of walkways and fountains that make it an ideal place for people to spend their leisure time in a pleasant environment. It is a seven terraced garden and the water channel flowing through these terraces is what gives the place its unique charm and makes it a perfect spot for families as well as couples who can get some memorable pictures clicked here. It has an area of around 30 hectares and is the largest tulip garden in Asia.

Kashmir's springtime is magical, when the valley is painted with vivid colors and soft scents as nature emerges from its winter hibernation. The Tulip Garden and Badamwari Garden are two well-known locations at the center of this seasonal change.

These gardens tell a story of hope and resiliency that appeals to tourists from all over the world. They are symbols of love, rebirth, and harmony that capture the essence of spring in Kashmir. Almond blossoms, symbolizing hope and rejuvenation, and the valley's readiness to welcome the warmth of the sun after the hard winter months, are symbolic of almond blossoms and new beginnings, respectively.

Tulip Festival in Srinagar is not just a visual feast, it's a cultural Extravaganza that weaves a Colourful experience. From amazing music concerts to captivating dance performances and the Soul Stirring regional folk festivals, there's an abundance of cultural gems to uncover. This festival isn't just about witnessing nature's beauty; it's a holistic journey that leaves you with cherished memories of Kashmir's Natural Wonders, its lively culture, and the warmth of its people.

Kashmir is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, and unique climatic variations. Among thevarious seasons that grace this idyllic land, springand summer hold a special place, each bringing itsown charm and allure. Theenchanted beauty and cultural significance ofspring and summer in Kashmir makes it the real paradise on earth for every visitor.

Challenges and Strategies for Youths in Agriculture

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Now-a-days rural areas in India today are undergoing a phenomenal transformation. In place of individual effort, machines are taking over the hard labour and the government subsidies for mechanization of agricultural fields have brought on a renaissance, changing the face of Indian villages and farmers. Recently grain production in India has jumped highs. Many villages in India are endowed with rich resources to cultivate cereals, vegetables, fruits and grain. Individual per capita income must be raised through development of grain production aligned with information technology. So agriculture and allied sectors must work together to accomplish this feat. Presently, youngsters constitute only 13-19% of farmers. Youths are our greatest asset. India is a land of the youths. Youths have creative minds and are capable of achieving seemingly impossible tasks such as monsoon management, climate change adaptation, mitigation and enduring malnutrition. Average size of land holding in our country is small. Hence, group cooperation is important to harness the value of scale both in the production and post-harvest phases of farming. Rural youths can play a significance role in shaping the future of agriculture in India. There is dire need of agri-business centres and agri-clinics centres on a big scale. Farm schools need to be established in the fields of young farmers so as to promote the farmer-to-farmer learning. Value addition in agriculture is needed in order to increase the income and employment. New agricultural technologies need to be introduced after careful consideration of risks and benefits so that their adoption rate can be enhanced. Youths are the primarily productive human resource for socio-economic development of the nation. Thus, there is need to divert their role in mainstream development. The Indian youth is diverse in ethnicity, religion and socio-economic backgrounds. Such diversity necessitates customized initiatives to meet the needs and activate their untapped potential. There is need to work on biotechnology, biodiversity,

ecotechnology, food security, education and information and communication technologies. The strategic and participatory research, capacity building, networking and partnership building should be adopted including the principle of social inclusion in access to technologies which further can enhance the income and conserve natural resources. The research and outreach strategies need to be devised to bridge the rich-poor and gender divides in the areas of information, knowledge and skill empowerment. There is dire need to make agriculture more attractive and rewarding for the younger generation.

Agriculture is the backbone of India. Till now agriculture continues to be at the mercy of the monsoon and the markets in our country. It is imperative for the nation to produce food not only to feed its 1.40 billion population but also for an equal number of livestock. It is fact that if farmers work in the field, the non-farmers are able to eat. It is expected that for the next two decades the agriculture sector in India will undergo significant transformation which will result in both challenges and opportunities for the youths. In order to achieve food security, India must change from extensive production systems, characterized by minimal inputs and low yields to intensive systems which require greater investments in external inputs and labour saving technologies, but hold the potential to greatly increase yields and provide decent incomes and employment for the rural youths now and in future. The agriculture sector has the potential to provide numerous employment opportunities in food production, marketing, processing, retail, input sales, research and extension etc. In order to attract youths in agriculture Govt. has launched a project namely Attracting and Retaining Youths in Agriculture (ARYA). In Reasi and Kathua districts of J&K, this project is being run by the respective KVYs in Reasi and Kathua districts. There is need to work towards the goal of sustaining and aiding youths engaged in agriculture.

It is imperative to make agriculture a lucrative and profitable occupation in order to

increase that number. Income and employment among the rural youths can be increased by combining hard work with modern technologies. Youngsters play a major role and duty in conserving the natural resources. The day is not far when we shall have to pay for oxygen, when water will be rationed and grave bodily disorders will be rampant. Climate change is the burning issue and avertable disasters will create havoc everywhere. According to Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam said, "The duty to protect natural resources begins from oneself, then family, society and to the country". Technology needs to be technically accessible, culturally acceptable and environmentally feasible. There is need to create opportunities in seed industry for the young generation. We need to have a high-yielding/hybrid seeds and proper seed inputs for another Green Revolution. Availability of seeds must be ensured for seasonal crops. In India, we require 86 laks quintal seeds ever year. We meet only 30% of this requirement through Central Seed Forum and Seed Production Forum. In abroad seed related technologies are given more importance. Rural youths should possess honesty, talent, value added technologies, warehousing and storage facilities. It is predicted that by 2050, we have to produce at least double to our productivity.

Presently, climate has become highly unpredictable. Hence we need to consider these facts while we plan to improve agricultural productivity. There is need to develop new resistant drought varieties of different crops. Farmers must cooperate by rotating crops to achieve the best results. Alternate Cropping Pattern based on water and rainfall availability must be focussed under watershed management programmes. Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Green Manure usage, cow urine, Panchgavya, beejamrit, fermented butter milk etc. can be practiced by farmers. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) forecasting mark situations can also help farmers tremendously. Rural youths of the country can play the significant role in the second

Green Revolution brought about by the youths of this country with the new technologies and innovations. All the fallow and barren land in the villages can be leased and put into good use too. In present era youths of the country are coming to farming only for two reasons- either they don't get any better job or because they are genuinely interested in making a profitable affair out of it.

Farming requires full commitment and dedication. Adoption of micro-irrigation methods can significantly solve water issues. There is strong link between industry and agriculture. There must also be a marketing interface between agriculture and industry. This can be facilitated by eliminating middlemen in every village. Policy changes need to be put in place to curb the rampant indiscriminate sale of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. Farmers need to be educated on export chances and Farmers Producers Organisations (FPOs) need to be formed for this purpose. But this can be possible only by institutionalising good cold storage and warehousing facilities for the agricultural produce. Agricultural colleges must also include life sciences and cultivation practices in their syllabus. Kitchen-gardening practices need to be encouraged. Vaccination of goats and sheep by government veterinary hospitals should be instituted and the veterinary doctor need to visit the goat and sheep farms. Deworming medicine should also be provided to the dairy farmers. Rain guns and sprinkler equipments should be provided to the farmers at the subsidized rates. Integrated farming, including poultry farming, dairy farming and organic farming will prove to be resource-effective and environmentally viable. Vermicomposting and soil-testing at appropriate intervals must be done for the soil health management. The best agricultural practices can be combined with the traditional agricultural methods reinforced by modern technology and innovations. There is need to sow the seeds of creativity and enthusiasm among the youths.

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

Stray Dogs: A Residential Hazard and Role of Municipalities

■ MANMOHAN DHAR

Stray dogs are a common sight in many urban and rural areas, raising concerns about public safety, hygiene, and animal welfare. While dogs are often considered loyal companions, large populations of unvaccinated and unmonitored strays can pose significant risks to residents. These risks include the spread of diseases like rabies, aggressive behavior, and accidents caused by packs of dogs chasing vehicles or pedestrians. Addressing this issue requires a balanced approach that considers both public safety and animal welfare, with municipalities playing a crucial role in implementing effective solutions.

Stray dogs, especially in large numbers, can become territorial and aggressive, leading to dog bites and attacks. Children and elderly people are particularly vulnerable to such incidents. In some cases, packs of stray dogs may chase people or vehicles, leading to accidents and injuries. Stray dogs often lack proper vaccination and veterinary care, making them carriers of diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis, and parasitic infections. Rabies, in particular, is a fatal disease that can spread to humans through dog bites, posing a serious public health threat.

Barking and howling at night can cause significant noise pollution, disturbing residents' sleep and leading to increased stress levels. This is especially problematic in high-density residential areas where multiple stray dogs may gather.

Stray dogs often scavenge garbage in search of food, scattering waste across streets and residential areas. This not only creates unhygienic conditions but also attracts other pests such as rats and insects, further contributing to health hazards.

Municipal authorities have a legal and moral responsibility to manage stray dog populations effectively while ensuring humane treatment of animals. Their role includes:

One of the most effective ways to control the stray dog population is through the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program. Municipalities should implement widespread sterilization and vaccination drives to prevent uncontrolled breeding and reduce the spread of rabies.

Setting up animal shelters can help house stray dogs that are sick, injured, or aggressive. Encouraging adoption programs and collaborating with animal welfare organizations can also help provide homes for stray dogs, reducing their numbers on the streets.

Educating residents about responsible pet ownership, the importance of sterilization, and how to deal with stray dogs safely can reduce conflicts between humans and animals. Municipalities can also promote community participation in feeding and caring for strays in a controlled manner.

Proper garbage disposal and management can prevent stray dogs from scavenging in residential areas. Municipal bodies should ensure regular waste collection, provide covered garbage bins, and enforce regulations against littering.

Municipalities should establish helplines or online portals where residents can report stray dog-related issues. Dedicated dog-catching teams trained in humane handling should be deployed to capture aggressive or sick dogs and relocate them to shelters or treatment centers.

Stray dogs are an integral part of urban life, but their unchecked population can lead to serious residential hazards. A well-planned municipal strategy, incorporating sterilization, vaccination, sheltering, and public awareness, is essential to ensure a safe and harmonious coexistence between humans and stray animals. By adopting a humane and structured approach, municipalities can mitigate risks while ensuring the well-being of both residents and stray dogs.

Last but not the least, authorities need to take positives from other countries where they follow a very well planned and effective approach towards stray dogs' management, safety and care for the larger interests of their populations.

Not only in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, stray dog nuisance is a big point of concern for the municipalities in the entire country. So, it is their prime duty to head towards a better management of the problem.

Laws and ethics must work together to achieve gender equality

■ SURJIT SINGH FLORA

Female feticide and sex-selective abortion are major issues globally, worsened by medical advancements like ultrasonography and amniocentesis that allow parents to know the fetus's sex early in pregnancy.

In Canada, a large and diverse country, abortion is a legal and regulated medical procedure. It's accessible during pregnancy and funded by the public. Access to abortion services differs by region.

Abortion was illegal in Canada until 1988, when the Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional. Since then, abortion has been permitted at any stage of a woman's pregnancy. Abortion is funded by the public as a medical procedure according to the Canada Health Act.

A 2022 report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) highlighted India, China, Azerbaijan, and Vietnam as the countries with the most unfavourable sex ratios. In patriarchal societies, the preference for male children, combined with smaller family sizes and sex-determination technologies, has led to a notable demographic imbalance. This imbalance has worsened issues like the increasing trafficking of women, forced marriages, and

overall social instability.

Concerns about sex-selective abortion are emerging even in developed countries like the United States. The ongoing talks about reproductive rights and bodily autonomy bring added complexity to the conversation. Opinions vary on sex-selective abortions; some argue that banning them limits a woman's autonomy, while others believe allowing them promotes gender discrimination. Different viewpoints show that legislative actions alone are not enough to remove gender bias.

Laws are crucial for deterrence but enforcing them is a major challenge. In 1994, India passed the PCPNDT Act to ban sex-selective abortion, yet female feticides continue unabated. A 2011 study in The Lancet estimated that around 12 million female fetuses were aborted in India in the past thirty years. Legal actions alone cannot resolve the deep societal unease this ongoing issue reveals. A legal framework can shape behaviours, but it can't quickly change deep-rooted cultural values.

Official statistics on sex-selective abortion are scarce, but cultural signs indicate a deeply rooted gender discrimination worldwide. The preference for sons, along with financial issues and

a trend toward smaller families, significantly contributes to the gradual disappearance of daughters. A viewpoint that sees daughters as financial burdens and sons as future providers leads to continued discrimination.

However, lasting change requires more than just policies; it demands a deep cultural and ethical shift. Morality, often explored through history, goes beyond just legal limits. They govern human behaviour in areas outside legal boundaries. Some actions might meet legal standards, but they don't always follow ethical principles. An ethical community prioritizes protecting its most vulnerable members. Without moral considerations, laws fall short. History shows that without moral support, legal rights often fail to protect women's obligations.

Ethics play a crucial role in promoting women's rights. Ethical considerations greatly shape the moral framework of societies, impacting views on gender equality and human dignity. Different cultures emphasize ethical principles like justice, equity, and the intrinsic worth of every individual. As communities adopt these values, practices such as sex-selective abortion and gender-based discrimination become social-

ly unacceptable. Ethical frameworks foster empathy and social responsibility, encouraging a commitment to uphold women's rights as a moral necessity, not just a legal obligation. Academic institutions, media, and religious and cultural organizations play a key role in fostering ethical principles that support gender equality.

It is important for national and international organizations focused on women's rights to recognize that while legal protections are valuable, ethical considerations are vital for creating gender-equal societies. Ethics and law must work together seamlessly. Movements for women's rights must link their goals to broader societal issues, emphasizing that both men and women are vital for the future of humanity.

Ending gender discrimination requires more than just legal changes; it demands a deep ethical commitment within the community. Real change comes from shifting how society thinks and building a collective sense of responsibility. True gender equality can be achieved only when legal measures and ethical awareness work together.

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