

A GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Biodiversity—the vast variety of life on Earth—is the foundation of our planet's health, sustaining ecosystems and human life alike. From the tiniest microbes to towering forests, every species plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. However, biodiversity is under unprecedented threat due to human activities such as deforestation, pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction. Preserving this incredible diversity is not just an environmental necessity but a moral and economic imperative for the survival of all life forms, including humanity.

Biodiversity provides essential ecosystem services that sustain life on Earth. Forests purify air, wetlands filter water, bees and butterflies pollinate crops, and oceans regulate climate. A rich variety of plants and animals also ensures food security, provides medicinal resources, and supports livelihoods, particularly for indigenous and rural communities. Furthermore, biodiversity enhances the resilience of ecosystems, enabling them to adapt to environmental changes and recover from disturbances like wildfires, droughts, and hurricanes.

Beyond its ecological and economic benefits, biodiversity holds immense cultural and spiritual value. Many indigenous traditions and belief systems are deeply rooted in the natural world, with sacred species and landscapes playing a vital role in their heritage. Preserving biodiversity is, therefore, also about safeguarding the cultural identities and knowledge systems of communities that have coexisted with nature for centuries.

Despite its significance, biodiversity is facing an alarming decline. Habitat destruction due to urbanization, agriculture, and logging has led to the loss of forests, wetlands, and coral reefs. Pollution from industries and plastic waste is contaminating oceans and freshwater bodies, endangering marine life. Climate change is disrupting natural habitats, forcing species to migrate or perish. Illegal wildlife trade and overexploitation of natural resources have also driven many species to the brink of extinction. The ongoing loss of biodiversity is not just an environmental crisis but a direct threat to human well-being.

Establishing and expanding protected areas such as national parks, wildlife reserves, and marine sanctuaries can safeguard species and ecosystems. Governments and conservation organizations must collaborate to enforce strict protection measures against deforestation, poaching, and illegal encroachment.

Balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility is key to biodiversity conservation. Sustainable agriculture, responsible fishing, and eco-friendly urban planning can reduce habitat destruction while supporting human development.

Addressing climate change through renewable energy adoption, afforestation, and carbon emission reduction is crucial to preserving biodiversity. Protecting ecosystems like rainforests and wetlands can help absorb carbon dioxide and mitigate climate change impacts.

Enforcing environmental regulations, banning harmful practices like wildlife trafficking and promoting international cooperation are essential for biodiversity protection.

Empowering local communities and indigenous people to protect their natural surroundings ensures effective conservation. Their traditional knowledge and sustainable practices can greatly contribute to biodiversity preservation.

■ GL RAINA

Development in areas of Jammu & Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan was mentioned in the Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday March 4, 2025. NC members tried to portray areas of POJK as more developed as compared to the Jammu Kashmir. Assembly members of BJP rebuffed the attempt forcefully and intensely. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had to intervene.

"We have to accept that while there is limited development in our frontier areas, on the other side, there have been deliberate attempts to showcase progress. However, this so-called development was facilitated by China, not Pakistan," the Chief Minister said.

Was it casual? Why did the members of NC mention POJK development and why did Omar Abdullah implicitly endorse the same? This legitimate query needs scrutiny.

Habitual Offender

National Conference and its leadership is habitual offender in this politics of double speech, deception, delusion and deliberate attempt to shift narratives. It has repeatedly tried to move away from public scrutiny by making controversial statements whenever it finds itself in a tight spot. Thereby surcharging the environment emotionally remains only way out.

People remember that infamous speech of Sheikh Abdullah at Ranbirsinghpura Jammu on April 10, 1952 where he dismissed full integration into India as "unrealistic, childish and savouring of lunacy" only to dismissing the idea of independence as foolish in the Madras Congress session soon after.

Green Handkerchief and rock salt is also fresh in public memory. So is the support or use of plebeian front, Al-Fatah to KLF, social boycott of political adversaries etc. They may declare from rooftops that Jammu Kashmir acceded to the India of Gandhi ji but did not allow the statue of the apostle of non-violence to be installed in the premises of High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar.

While in government they use hard language against separatists & anti-Indian elements and plead/enact strong Laws like PSA

but make hue and cry when out of power. One day they question the Instrument of Accession on another day they would ask to teach Pakistan a lesson.

Why POJK Now

Post 2019 historic decision of full integration of Jammu Kashmir with rest of the country has transformed Kashmir: Walls of distrust, disbelief and uncertainty about the status of Jammu Kashmir were demolished in one stroke.

Threats of bloodshed, large scale violence and widespread mayhem proved to be a hoax. Credit goes to the people of Jammu Kashmir who behaved maturely and proved these prophets of doom wrong.

Jammu Kashmir in turn was blessed with peace tranquillity, accelerated pace of development and innumerable opportunities unfolding. Politics of blackmail and role of political commission agents got eliminated. Fears of rest of the country swallowing Kashmiris were found to be groundless.

Central government took great interest & initiatives in improving the quality of life, instituted a host of people-friendly enterprises in the field of tourism, comprehensive programmes to empower locals and infrastructural development activities.

G20 meeting and Formula 4 race event were staged in Srinagar. Train connectivity established. Record number of flights handled at Srinagar Airport and number of steps like that enthused people to shun the politics of emotionalism.

Empowerment of common people by strengthening of 3-tier Panchayat Raj, first ever DDC elections and extension of reservation benefits to the entitled underprivileged sections of population like STs and OBCs virtually eroded the base of traditional politics in Kashmir. To stop further erosion and attempt a reverse of tide is one major reason behind these unsolicited remarks in the state assembly.

Other off course is the growing resentment of people of POJK against Pakistan establishment and cry for integration with India. Although the current uprising there is predominantly centred around economic issues, there is a deeper underpinning of issues of

political economy and political freedoms that appear to be sustaining the movement

Factual comparison

Comparative study of development and freedom and other parameters will expose the NC design further. Several individuals and organisations have been studying Jammu and Kashmir keenly. Organisation Law and Society Alliance is an independent Indian national growth organisation providing legal and knowledge intervention on issues that need study and research, data mining and analysis, and prolonged ground work. It also studied and released a report listing the comparison between PoJK, JK and Gilgit-Baltistan as far as the condition of living is concerned. The study was a mapping exercise of human development and human rights conditions existing in J&K and PoJK along with G-B, followed by a comparative analysis of development components under various categories. Most of the data relied upon by the organisation are open-source data like media reports, government reports, research carried about local, national and international NGOs etc.

There are several aspects that were compared in the report as far as the living conditions; human rights conditions and development in the respective regions are concerned.

Some points that have been highlighted in the report are like the Budget allotted to PoJK by Pakistan and JK by India, the report says that the PoJK government allocated PKR (Pakistani Rupee) 12,156 crore or US\$773 million for its 2019-20budget. On the other hand, J&K spent INR (Indian National Rupees) 88,911 crore or US\$12.4 billion in the fiscal year 2019-20 (This has since been enhanced to Rs. 1,18,728 Crores in 2024-25).

Essentially, India allocated funds which as 16 times higher compared to the amount spent by Pakistan in Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

The literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan was an abysmal stage, at 14% for men and 3.5% for women. In Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the literacy rate was at 60%. The literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir, on the other hand, was 67.16%.

The report states that there are currently six small and big universities in PoJK. Except for the University of Azad Kashmir, all other universities were founded in the 21st century and are yet to be fully developed. As of now, there are ten major State Universities and two major Central Universities in J&K: one Central University in each part of the state - Central University of Jammu and Central University of Kashmir. In addition, there are four premier Institutes of National Importance including Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu, National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Srinagar.

The spending by the respective governments on education is also a telling market of how seriously the government's view education and literacy in the respective regions.

The budget of Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir for health in the fiscal year 2019-20 was US\$62 million. India allocated \$ 618 million for health in year 2019.

According to the report, the number of hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir stands at 5,534 while in PoJK, the number of hospitals is only 73. The infant mortality rate also shows a massive difference. In JK, the IMR is 23 while in PoJK, it is 62. Doctor to patient ratio according to this report is 1:1658 in Jammu Kashmir as compared to 1:4916 for PoJK. The Union Territory of Jammu Kashmir has an area of 42,241 km² which has been divided into 20 Districts.

This was comparative study done before historic decisions taken on August 5, 2019. Since then Jammu and Kashmir has seen a huge transformation on every parameter of human development index.

Infrastructure that includes railways and road connectivity, sports infra and industrial development has been unprecedented comparing two sides of Jammu Kashmir is like chalk and cheese. People must understand the real intent behind this narrative push and defeat such a design in a befitting manner.

(The writer is former Member of Legislative Council of Jammu Kashmir and spokesperson of BJP J&K)

J&K Vs POJK
Politics of deception & delusion to stop altering attitude of the People of Kashmir

The Art of Asset Allocation-Striking the Right Balance

■ ROHINI GUPTA



This is where asset allocation comes into play—a strategic approach that determines how investments are spread across different asset classes to balance reward and risk effectively.

At its core, asset allocation is the process of spreading investments across multiple asset classes, such as equities, debt instruments, gold, and real estate. The goal is simple: to minimise risk while optimising returns.

Each asset class reacts differently to economic conditions. Equities perform well during economic expansion, offering high returns, while debt instruments provide stability during downturns. Gold acts as a protection against inflation and market volatility. A well-structured asset allocation strategy takes these factors into account to ensure a diversified and resilient portfolio.

Investors often make emotional decisions driven by market movements—buying at

peaks due to euphoria and selling at lows out of fear. This behaviour can lead to substantial financial losses. However, a disciplined asset allocation approach mitigates such risks by maintaining a balanced mix of investments, ensuring exposure to different asset classes regardless of market cycles.

Studies suggest that asset allocation is a major determinant of investment performance over time. While stock selection and market timing do play a role, the right allocation strategy significantly impacts portfolio returns and risk management.

For investors seeking a structured approach to asset allocation without the hassle of constant monitoring, professionally managed

solutions like asset allocation mutual funds can be an ideal choice. One such fund is the ICICI Prudential Asset Allocator Fund (FOF), which dynamically adjusts allocations across equity-oriented schemes, debt-oriented schemes, and gold ETFs/schemes using an in-house valuation model. As of January 31, 2025, it has delivered a one-year return of 11.90%, with a CAGR of 12.92% over three years and a CAGR of 13.87% over five years.

Thus, by embracing asset allocation as a long-term strategy, investors can confidently navigate market uncertainties, ensuring wealth preservation and growth over time.

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Long pending demand impacting life of every pensioner

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

The Retired Bank Employees are waiting for more than 35 years to get what has been agreed with them and what is being extended in Government and other Public Sector Organisations in the matter of Pension. If we talk about Pension for Bank employees, Bank employees and officers wanted Pension as third benefit but the Government and IBA insisted that Pension Scheme would be introduced in the Banks exactly on the lines of Government Employees Pension Scheme. So when Pension settlement was signed in 1993 and Pension Regulations were framed in 1995 it came exactly as per the Central Government Employees Pension Scheme. The negative and punitive aspects of the Government Pension Scheme were also included in the Bank Employees Pension Scheme such as Pension subject to future good conduct, initiation of disciplinary proceedings even after retirement and Dearness Relief which used to be paid every three months is now made payable every six months quoting that for Government Employees it is payable only every six months.

Here I would like to recall our FM Nirmala Sitharaman who had advised the IBA in her keynote address at the 73rd Annual General Meeting on 20th November, 2020 that bank pensioners shall not be left to themselves post-retirement and they shall be given OROP (One Rank, One Pension) in view of the laudable service they had rendered for the banks while in service, as was granted by her to the Defence pensioners. But till date neither the IBA nor the Department of Financial Service took care of the words of the Minister and her reassuring words brought double disappointment to the bank pensioners. At that time the Retirees of the Industry were listening with rapt attention what our honourable Finance Minister said on the occasion and their hopes and aspirations were immensely heightened after her inspiring interview with Hindu Business Line also.

Through this article, I would like to state that Bank Retirees demand for the updation of pension which has been impacting the life of every pensioner including the family pensioners has not been settled yet. It is clear that despite several ruling by the Apex Court that the Salary Revision and Pension Revision are inseparable; Pension is not a bounty; Pension is a deferred wage etc, our Pension has not been revised since 1987. One would be surprised to this unfair situation that a Top Executive Grade General Manager who retired after 01.01.1987, draws lesser pension than a senior clerk who retires today. One must not forget that Pensioners and Retirees have contributed their best to transfigure Banking for which there is no comparison in the world elsewhere. Finance Minister's interview in the Business Line and address to the 73rd AGM of IBA had raised the hopes and aspirations of the Bank Pensioners who had contributed to the nation building during their active service and continue to chip in even after retirement whenever the occasions demanded like PMJDY campaign, Demonetization etc.

It is very important to note that the Pension Fund is mainly constituted by surrendering CPF by the Pensioners during their service and any pension related improvement is not affecting the Balance Sheet of the Bank as such improvements are paid out of Pension Fund only. As regards Family Pension, the original provision for a Pensioner was made at the rate of 50% of the last drawn pay whereas the proposed improvement in Family Pension stands at only 30%. Due to unresolved issue of this crucial issue has forced the huge number of Widow Pensioners to live a life of acute financial misery as the monthly pension is unbelievably low.

Time has now come when our FM must settle this long pending issue urgently so that this hitherto deserted section of the pensioners could get the benefit of revision of pension. It should be noted by the Government that retirees should never be forgotten as everyone is going to retire one day. Finance Ministry is last hope to help realize Bank Pensioners legitimate due.

Career management in the modern workplace

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



their career effectively and confidently.

To effectively advance in a career, it is important to set goals and strategically pursue opportunities. Understanding how to manage a career can help you plan professional goals better and enhance growth prospects. If you work in human resources, learning more about career management can help you make an informed decision when implementing occupational programmes in your workplace. In this article, we define career management, share its elements, discuss its objectives and list the benefits to help you plan better.

It is plain that the skills needed for career management are highly personal and depend on self-awareness and reflective processes that drive the employability skills needed to succeed in a competitive market where employers vie for talent. Career paths are increasingly personal to the individual who may work in a range of roles, functions, sectors and careers. The career ladder is no longer the dominant model as increasingly we see lateral moves and tours of duty as desirable in a world where the 'career' is a fluid and subjective concept.

For organisational leadership there is a real benefit in ensuring that employees are provided with an environment that works for all generations and which reflects the values and culture of the organisation. In the ideal world this is not just a range of work space options to choose from but a really smart work environment that encourages networking and collaboration.

Enhancing the employee experience approach provides not just financially operational efficiency but an employee experience which is really fit for the future and enables an employer to differentiate themselves in driving the connection to their brand, their values, their culture.

Little things make a big difference, so it's important to take into account what makes employees feel connected to the organisation. For young workers today it is crucial to feel good, that what they're doing during the day is meaningful and so management need to think about that in terms of employer branding and providing an environment and amenities. You can leverage the efficiency of the work-



place by providing choices and enabling integration of working life and personal preferences for the workforce which will benefit everybody.

Career management is the process of thoughtfully planning occupational progress to maximise professional growth and stability in an individual's career. Doing this requires identifying one's own goals and objectives. These goals may be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based) to ensure a strategic approach. This process usually begins with designing short-term goals in the initial stages of one's career, which focus on taking action to meet the set objectives. You can then follow with planning long-term goals. When managing a career, certain adjustments in planning are sometimes necessary to accommodate changes in industry requirements or preferences.

Career planning is an intentional process involving determining career goals, understanding the opportunities and potential constraints and making decisions, while also considering their consequences and taking active steps to achieve those goals. Typically, the employee and their supervisor do this together. The employee usually requires assessing their skills and experience to better understand their strengths and areas to improve to become more proficient as a professional. They may then discuss with their supervisors about the opportunities in those areas or fields.

A career path is similar to a roadmap that lets employees know their progress opportunities within an organisation

in the long term. By looking at the career expectations that are set during the planning process, employees and their supervisors can monitor and consider potential paths for the employee. As an employee may likely have several career path options available to them, companies often try to have a clear career development structure in place to encourage employees to join their organisation.

An organisation's career development system ideally establishes these paths so that employees have specific objectives to strive for and potential role models to consult and follow. It is best to remain practical while identifying career paths in relation to the time frame required to achieve mutually set goals.

Employees may work hard at their jobs but may not always achieve their desired goals per the set expectations. This makes it important that they identify the skills or technical proficiencies necessary to progress in the career in the organisation and achieve growth. By actively participating in programmes aimed at managing one's career and following the guidelines, employees can improve the quality of their work and become more valuable team members.

Occupational management programmes can help align employee and company goals. It encourages the employees to develop skills that help their individual growth and the company in the future. They also help improve the employees' performance and increase output. If there is a strategic and planned approach to work, it may help ensure meeting certain standards set by the company. The occupational management process gives the management an opportunity to modify workplace structures and processes so the employees can work better and achieve mutual goals better.

While often used interchangeably, career management and career development are distinct concepts that complement each other. Career management is the overarching strategy - the "big picture" planning and decision-making process that guides your professional journey. It's like being the architect of your career, designing the blueprint for your professional future.

Career development, on the other hand, focuses on the tactical execution of your career management plan. It involves the specific steps you take to acquire new skills, gain experience, and progress along your chosen path. This might include pursuing additional education, taking on challenging assignments, or seeking mentorship opportunities.

The relationship between these concepts is symbiotic. Your career management strategy informs which development opportunities to pursue, while your career development experiences may lead you to adjust your management strategy. Together, they create a comprehensive approach to professional growth and success.