

RAIN HAVOC

The recent torrential rains in Jammu have unleashed havoc, causing widespread destruction and distress among the residents. The region has experienced unprecedented rainfall, leading to severe flooding, landslides, and the disruption of daily life.

The heavy downpour has resulted in the swelling of rivers and streams, overflowing their banks and inundating numerous low-lying areas. The floodwaters have also caused significant damage to infrastructure, hampering transportation and connectivity. Power outages have been widespread due to the downed power lines, further compounding the difficulties faced by the affected population.

One of the most critical impacts has been on agriculture, the backbone of the local economy. Fields have been flooded, destroying standing crops and leading to substantial financial losses for farmers.

The saturated soil has triggered numerous landslides, blocking roads and isolating entire villages.

In conclusion, the rain havoc in Jammu has highlighted the region's vulnerability to extreme weather events. While the immediate focus remains on rescue and relief, there is a pressing need for long-term strategies to mitigate the impact of such disasters, improve infrastructure, and enhance the region's overall resilience.

Bangladesh: Strategic Challenge for India

DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

Sheikh Hasina is pro-India, so her absence could invite Chinese gains in Bangladesh, which could challenge India's influence. China's recent initiatives in Bangladesh under the Belt and Road Initiative could gain further momentum, thereby reducing India's strategic edge.

Political unrest in Bangladesh could affect the Bengali population of West Bengal, which could influence domestic politics and policy-making in India. Refugee influx or political unrest in Bangladesh could become a contentious issue in West Bengal state politics, which could influence electoral dynamics.

The recent political upheaval in Bangladesh, including the resignation and move of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India, has brought new challenges and complexities to India's regional diplomacy. With Bangladesh undergoing military rule and civil unrest, India finds its strategic interests and regional policy at a crossroads, which requires it to re-evaluate its diplomatic stance.

The sudden political vacuum in Bangladesh and the return of military rule pose challenges for India which has historically supported democratic governance in its neighbourhood. For example: The abrupt end of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's term could lead to unexpected policy changes in Dhaka, impacting bilateral initiatives such as border management and counter-terrorism measures.

The involvement of Islamist groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami in the protests could potentially alter the secular fabric of Bangladeshi politics, threatening regional security and impacting India's efforts against radicalism. The growing influence of radical elements could lead to increased radical activities along the border, requiring India to take more stringent security measures.

India's vital trade ties with Bangladesh are at risk. Cross-border disruptions and delayed payments for Indian exporters reflect the sensitivity of these countries' economic interdependence. For example: Recent curfews and protests have temporarily closed key trade routes such as the Petrapole-Benapole border, disrupting bilateral trade worth millions of dollars per day.

The unstable political scenario could lead to an influx of refugees and a rise in cross-border crimes, forcing India to tighten security measures. Past political upheaval in Bangladesh has historically led to refugee crises, particularly during the 1971 war, which had a lasting impact on India's northeastern states.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is pro-India, so her absence could invite Chinese influence in Bangladesh, which could challenge India's influence. China's recent initiatives in Bangladesh under the Belt and Road Initiative could gain further momentum, reducing India's strategic edge.

Maintaining a balance between non-interference and the need to protect its interests could put India's international image as a regional leader and stabilizer at stake. Overly aggressive policies or perceived interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs could lead to international criticism and impact India's standing in global forums. Political unrest in Bangladesh could affect the Bengali population of West Bengal, which could influence domestic politics and policy-making in India. Refugee influx or political unrest in Bangladesh could become a contentious issue in West Bengal state politics, which could influence electoral dynamics.

India should maintain open channels of communication with all political entities in Bangladesh, including the interim military government, to safeguard its interests and promote stability. Host diplomatic dialogue with key Bangladeshi leaders and international stakeholders to discuss stabilization efforts and democratic transitions.

Using economic tools such as trade promotion, aid, and investment could help India use its soft power and foster good relations irrespective of the ruling regime. Favorable trade agreements or development assistance for infrastructure projects in Bangladesh should be increased, which would strengthen economic ties.

Enhancing security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and joint operations against terrorism and cross-border crimes can help manage the consequences of political instability. Initiating joint patrols and intelligence sharing to prevent smuggling and terrorist activities along the India-Bangladesh border. Strengthening cultural ties and people-to-people contacts can serve as the basis for lasting ties, thereby reducing political and ideological differences.

Promoting cultural festivals and student exchange programs to promote mutual understanding and goodwill between the people of the two countries. Building regional consensus through forums such as SAARC and BIMSTEC to address common challenges such as security and development should promote a collective approach to stability. Initiating a regional dialogue focused on security and economic development that includes Bangladesh and other neighboring countries.

With the political crisis in Bangladesh, India must move strategically in this transitional phase and strike a balance between non-interference and active engagement. The evolution of India's diplomatic strategy will be crucial in maintaining regional stability and safeguarding its interests amid the changing political landscape of its neighbor. This friendly diplomacy can help India strengthen its role as a regional leader committed to peace and development.

Kisan Khidmat Ghars: A Revolution in Agricultural Extension Services

DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is heading for revolutionary changes in the agricultural and allied sectors. In fact this UT has started witnessing the changes. Under the visionary leadership of Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, a renewed thrust is being given to agriculture and allied sectors through Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) by technology backstopping, farm friendly interventions, farmer's mobilization and increasing extension outreach through an all inclusive and bottom up approach. Both the farm varieties of the UT along with the agriculture and line departments have been working around the clock to ensure that the benefits of various programmes ultimately reach out to end users. As pointed out by I.G, the ultimate aim of all this exercise is to empower 13 lakh farm families with a special focus on 3 lakh farm families which fall under the category of marginal farmers and are hence more vulnerable.

To strengthen the agriculture and allied sectors and to overcome various constraints faced by the farming community in availing the benefits of various government schemes, administration of Union Territory came up with an Apex Level Committee (UTALC) for holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors. The committee was to devise a roadmap for holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors in Jammu and Kashmir. The eight member committee assisted by different Technical Working Groups (TWG) is headed by Dr. Mangla Rai, Former Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The committee after hectic and rigorous deliberations with different stakeholders came up with a Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) in which different targets were set up for development of agriculture and allied sectors and these targets were

to be achieved in the next five years. The different targets to be achieved include doubling contribution of Agri-GDP in next five years, increasing Seed Replacement Rate (SRR), doubling resource use efficiency in respect of nutrients and moisture, reducing food wastage through proper post harvest management by building suitable infrastructure and food processing; tripling of food processing by focusing on secondary agriculture; building capacity to meet the requirements of the quality planting material; establishment of functional and profitable Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), availing of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), vocational skill trainings, build state data banks using artificial intelligence and ICT tools and to reduce the use of agrochemicals. Twenty Nine (29) different projects aimed at transforming the agricultural economy of J&K have been sanctioned under HADP. Monitorable indicators have been set up for each of the Projects. The twenty nine projects are expected to almost double the output of the sectors, boosting exports and making the sectors sustainable and viable. The agricultural output which stands at rupees 37,600 crores shall increase by over rupees 28,142 crores to reach 65700 crores per year with a resultant increment in sectoral growth rate to 11 per cent. The interventions shall create employment opportunities for over 2.8 lakh youth and establish around 19,000 enterprises. More than 2.5 lakh peoples shall be skilled in various agri-enterprises.

Among these 29 projects, Project No. 20 entitled Innovative Approaches in Agriculture Extension aims to revitalize the agricultural extension services in the Union Territory by incorporating IT Based solutions, making it more inclusive with a bottom up approach for Development of Agriculture in Jammu and Kashmir. Twenty one Monitorable indicators have been identified for the project on Innovative Approaches in Agricultural

Extension. Of these 21 indicators, the one which has the potential to strengthen and revolutionize agricultural extension and advisory services in the rural areas is the establishment of 2000 Kisan Khidmat Ghars' as one-stop service centers providing end-to-end linkages.

On August 04, Lieutenant Governor of the UT Manoj Sinha inaugurated 500 Kisan Khidmat Ghars' (online mode) for the farming community of the UT in the Kisan Unnati Sammelan being held at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir Shalimar, Srinagar. While inaugurating them, he told that the KKGs will serve as one-stop service hubs, offering comprehensive support, from input supply to marketing and technological assistance to the farming community of the region. Sh. Sinha termed their establishment as a significant milestone in the journey under the Holistic Agriculture Development Program. KKGs equipped with modern Information Technology Systems will ensure efficient delivery of critical services such as input booking, soil health monitoring, plant diagnostics, market intelligence, and capacity building. These Centres will also enable farmers' access to custom hiring services, artificial insemination, horticulture and institutional data ensuring that farmers have access to necessary and timely services. On this occasion, LG also launched Kisan Khidmat Ghar mobile App, designed to provide comprehensive support to farmers. Both the KKGs and the mobile application will greatly enhance accessibility to information and services, leading to better decision-making and higher productivity. Farmers can use Kisan Khidmat Ghar app for credit support, crop price forecasting, decision support, applying for government schemes, booking expert consultations, locating dealers, and accessing skilling courses, farming calendars, and guides. The integration of Internet of Things (IoT) along with Artificial

Intelligence (AI), and real-time data analytics will definitely pave the way for revolutionizing the agricultural extension services. In the first phase 500 KKGs have been inaugurated across the length and breadth of this UT and 1500 KKGs will be established in the second phase for which the work is to be completed by end of this year.

The Kisan Khidmat Ghars as a vital and potent tool in agricultural extension will definitely do away with the several generic constraints which our traditional agricultural extension system is prone to. The public extension system prevalent in the country often fails to take into account the needs and perceptions of the farming community because of their linear approach leading to huge gap between public sector extension institutions and farmers. The lack of trained men power is another constraint with the public extension system which often devoid farming community of reliable and timely knowledge. The KKGs will definitely bridge the present large gap in agriculture extension worker to farmer ratio. It will also be a storehouse of expertise as the knowledge and information provided to the farming community will be reliable blended with technology and real time data analysis. As the KKGs are set up at Panchayat level, these will be accountable to local representatives. These centres will bring essential services directly to farmers' doorsteps ensuring last mile delivery of extension services. Besides, the establishment of 2000 KKGs also means employment to 2000 youths also.

As the Krishi Udyami employed in these Kisan Khidmat Ghars are young agriculture graduates mostly and they have to cater to a diverse set of population with varied consultancy, advisory and diagnostic needs; it is necessary that their skills and knowledge be regularly updated and upgraded so that they can provide their services more effectively.

(The author writes on agriculture and social issues)

Parents should consider developing digital parenting skills

SURJIT SINGH FLORA

The internet may be compared to a big library, where obtaining information is really easy. It is critical to encourage youngsters to use the internet as a great resource for performing research on school assignments. It is critical for supervision to check the search history on a regular basis. Discuss with the youngsters the dangers of using social media and how they can protect themselves. Everyone must be aware.

However, in this digital age, parenting may be difficult and stressful. Parenting has become more difficult as a result of computer and phone connectivity. Parenting in the digital era is getting more difficult.

Digital parenting comprises teaching children how to use technology properly, establishing limits, and informing them about the dangers of excessive digital exposure.

The purpose of digital parenting is to help children have positive and safe relationships with technology.

Parents can easily overcome challenges by embracing new technology and staying up-to-date with the latest advancements. If they're around the age of 58 or older, they are likely experienced enough to be familiar with digital technologies, perhaps even as savvy as a grandparent.

During the school holidays, countless children find themselves with ample free time at home, away from the guidance of their teachers and often without the constant presence of their busy parents. Many parents find the holiday season to be a challenging time, as children have easy access to potentially harmful content on various online platforms.

The internet is a remarkable tool that allows people of all ages to learn, play, and connect with family, friends, and like-minded individuals in our ever-changing global landscape. However, similar to the outside world, the digital realm can present substantial risks.

It is critical for parents to learn digital parenting skills in order to safeguard their chil-

dren from the different risks that might come from social media. These threats include child sexual exploitation, self-harm promotion, violent incitement, endangering people's safety, and the propagation of hatred. Parenting in the digital era requires parents to understand, support, and supervise their children's online activities.

In today's world, it is commonly recognized that parents have a communal responsibility to give their children with the necessary knowledge to navigate the digital age. The issue of digital parenting delves into several techniques for parents to monitor and supervise their children's usage of digital technologies, including when and how to introduce technology to children of different ages.

This emphasizes the significance of preparing today's parents to efficiently handle the hurdles presented by technology in contemporary families. In some jurisdictions, schools are actively working with parents and children to promote digital parenting programs, with the goal of creating a safer and more pleasant online environment for families and children. The United Kingdom's Annual Digital Parenting Week started in October 2020.

The Week acknowledges the commendable efforts made by parents in raising children, particularly in the challenging landscape of the internet, which has made parenting an increasingly complex task. With the increasing prevalence of digital literacy in around the globe, it is crucial to prioritize the safety and well-being of our children in maintaining a peaceful and stable domestic order.

Parents should educate themselves with internet safety practices. It is critical that parents spend time online with their children and teach them good online conduct. Additionally, bookmarking children's favorite websites might make them more accessible. As a responsible parent, you should periodically check your credit card and phone bills for any unusual purchases. It is also recommended to keep the computer in a communal area where you can

readily see and supervise its use, rather than letting it in separate bedrooms.

Keep track of how much time your children spend on cellphones or tablets. Furthermore, you should be informed of the internet security precautions used by your child's school, after-school center, friends' houses, or any other site where they may use a computer or smartphone without your supervision. If your kid reports an uncomfortable online encounter, it is critical that you address their concerns appropriately.

End of the day, the challenges are applicable to both parents and children. Handing over a phone, tablet, or computer to your child without any restrictions is a recipe for trouble. Instead, you can choose a day that is not associated with gift-giving and calmly explain to them that the phone, tablet, and/or computer are actually yours as the parent. Therefore, you have the authority to reclaim them at any point, including for the purpose of monitoring the websites and apps they access. Provide them with a comprehensive list of factors that could result in the loss of their phone or tablet privileges. Reasons should be comprehensive and cover a wide range of factors.

As a parent, it's important to lead by example and prioritize quality family time by putting your phone away, especially during meals. It's interesting to observe how many parents are just as engrossed in their phones and tablets as their children. Parents seem to be spending more time on their devices than their children, with Candy Crush, Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, texts, and emails taking up their attention. It is important for us to be mindful of the amount of time we spend on-air when our children are around. As time goes on, the challenge will only increase. Regarding our children's challenges, here are a few examples.

Engaging in online bullying. Experiencing online bullying, Had an encounter with explicit content, Subjected to offensive language, Building social circles online and at school and Difficulty with sleep patterns.

These are just a few of the challenges our chil-

dren encounter in our rapidly changing world. These are challenges that were unimaginable for us as children, given the lack of technology we had back then. Before our oldest daughter obtained her driver's license, my wife and I had her sign a contract outlining the conditions under which she would lose her driving privileges. In retrospect, I would strongly recommend creating a contract for their tech devices.

Like all parents, dealing with the challenges of raising a teenage son or daughter can be quite demanding. Parents have numerous concerns to contend with. Here are some common issues that often keep parents up at night:

One of the main challenges is guiding their energy towards the right path and helping them build a career that aligns with their interests and potential.

The company my teenage children kept always caused me a great deal of anxiety and stress. Peer pressure has the power to shape individuals, for better or for worse. I consistently emphasized the importance of surrounding oneself with friends who share similar interests.

There was a concern about alcohol and drugs. Many teenagers are susceptible to succumbing to negative influences at a young age due to peer pressure. It has become increasingly difficult for parents to shield their children from these vices, as the situation has changed, and the challenge has grown.

It is crucial to educate individuals on how to safeguard themselves against any form of sexual misconduct or abuse. It is crucial to educate them about the importance of speaking up and standing against such behavior.

Parenting can be quite challenging. It can be quite nerve-wracking and cause many sleepless nights, but if you remain observant and attentive to their behavior and activities, you may achieve the desired outcome of raising them to be responsible citizens. In turn, they may bring you immense joy and a sense of pride.

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How preparing for Olympiads can help ace JEE

VIJAY GARG

JEE hopefuls can improve their chances of success and gain a deeper respect and comprehension of the subjects they are passionate about by incorporating Olympiad preparation into their study routine.

One of the hardest and most difficult engineering entrance tests in India is the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). Numerous students strive to gain admission to esteemed establishments such as the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) every year. In order to accomplish this, students frequently put in a lot of preparation work and look for different ways to improve their conceptual knowledge and problem-solving abilities. Taking part in Olympiad exams is one such efficient route.

Understanding Olympiads and their relevance Olympiads are competitive tests intended to find and develop a student's aptitude in a particular field, such as computer science, physics, chemistry, biology, or mathematics. These tests, which range in difficulty from school to international, call for a thorough comprehension of the subject matter in addition to strong problem-solving skills. The parallels between Olympiads and JEE preparation make them relevant in this setting. Both call for a solid understanding of basic ideas, the capacity to work through challenging situations, and effective time management. Additionally, the JEE and Olympiad syllabuses frequently overlap, which enhances their mutual benefit.

Enhancing conceptual clarity A major advantage of getting ready for Olympiads is the focus on conceptual clarity.

Olympiad issues are renowned for their intricacy and profundity, compelling pupils to study the material thoroughly. This in-depth study aids in creating a solid foundation, which is essential for JEE questions that frequently assess how basic ideas are applied in different contexts. For example, there are questions in the Indian National Mathematical Olympiad (INMO) and the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO) that call for a deep comprehension of mathematical ideas and their relationships. Similar to this, a thorough understanding of physical concepts is the main goal of both the Indian National Physics Olympiad (INPhO) and the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO). Students gain a strong conceptual foundation by preparing for these Olympiads, which makes it simpler to take on the JEE syllabus.

Developing advanced problem-solving skills Olympiad problems require knowledge application in order to solve original and difficult problems; they do not only require memorisation. For JEE hopefuls, this component of the Olympiad preparation is quite helpful. Particularly in the JEE Advanced, students' analytical and logical reasoning skills are put to the test with challenging, application-based questions.

By working through Olympiad tasks, students can hone these sophisticated problem-solving techniques. The Chemistry Olympiad, for instance, has questions that test students' ability to use critical thinking skills and apply their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. The capacity to address JEE problems creatively and with confidence is honed by this type of practice.

Improving time management and examination strategy Effective time management is an essen-

tial competency for all competitive exams, including JEE and Olympiads. Olympiad exams usually contain a time constraint in which students have to work through difficult tasks.

Students can directly transfer their skills to manage their time efficiently to JEE by preparing for these tests. Olympiads also instruct students on how to plan their approach to the test. They get knowledge on how to manage their time effectively, rank questions according to difficulty and familiarity, and remain composed under duress. These are very helpful tactics for the JEE, where a person's performance can be greatly affected by how well they manage the exam.

Gaining confidence and competitive edge An Olympiad participant who does well might greatly increase their confidence. One feels accomplished and more prepared for other competitive tests like JEE because of the intense preparation and experience of competing at a high level. Olympiad accomplishments are also frequently acknowledged and praised by academic institutions, giving a student's resume a another boost. Access to advanced study material and resources

Students get access to advanced study materials and tools outside the usual school curriculum when they prepare for Olympiads. Specialised books, problem sets, and internet sites devoted to Olympiad preparation are frequently among these options. These resources help students get a deeper and wider understanding of the subjects they are studying for in JEE. JEE hopefuls can benefit greatly from books like "Problems in General Physics" by I.E. Irodov and "Mathematical Circles" by Dmitri Fomin, Sergey

Genkin, and Ilya Itenberg, which are frequently suggested for Physics and Mathematics Olympiads. They provide difficult issues and thorough solutions that improve problem-solving abilities. Building a strong peer network

Interaction with like-minded peers who have similar academic aspirations is a common part of preparing for an Olympiad. This network has the potential to be very encouraging and inspirational. Collaboratively addressing problems, exchanging resources, and having debates can all improve the learning process.

In addition to offering moral support, a robust peer network might be helpful during the rigorous JEE preparation phase. Beyond the immediate objective of competing well in these events, there are several advantages to training for Olympiads. Cracking the JEE requires a strong emphasis on conceptual clarity, sophisticated problem-solving techniques, time management, exam strategy, and confidence-building, among other things. In addition, having access to cutting-edge study resources and having a robust peer network to lean on are tremendous advantages in the quest for admission to esteemed engineering colleges.

JEE hopefuls can improve their chances of success and gain a deeper respect and comprehension of the subjects they are passionate about by incorporating Olympiad preparation into their study routine. In the end, they will benefit greatly from the abilities and information acquired from this demanding training in both their academic and professional endeavors.

(The writer is Retired Principal and Educational columnist)