

SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC HEALTH

The recent crackdown by authorities on the sale of unhygienic and adulterated food is a much-needed and commendable move. In an age where foodborne illnesses are becoming increasingly common, ensuring that what people consume meets basic hygiene and safety standards is not just a matter of law, but a matter of public health and human rights.

Across markets, eateries, and even reputed food establishments, reports of the use of stale ingredients, contaminated water, and improper storage of food items have been surfacing for years. The consequences of such practices are dire - from mild food poisoning to long-term health problems such as gastrointestinal diseases, liver damage, and even cancer due to consumption of harmful additives and chemicals. The recent actions taken by municipal corporations, food safety departments, and district administrations - including surprise inspections, sealing of unhygienic kitchens, fines on violators, and destruction of contaminated stock - reflect a renewed seriousness towards safeguarding public health. These actions not only protect consumers but also serve as a stern warning to those who flout safety regulations in pursuit of profit. However, enforcement alone is not enough. The problem of unhygienic food is deeply rooted in a lack of awareness, weak monitoring mechanisms, and in some cases, corruption. Many small vendors and street food sellers lack proper knowledge of food safety norms and hygiene practices. The solution, therefore, lies not just in punitive action, but also in sustained education and capacity-building initiatives. Food safety authorities must collaborate with local bodies to conduct awareness campaigns, offer training sessions for vendors, and incentivize hygienic practices. Regular checks should become a norm, not an exception. Technology can play a pivotal role in monitoring and ensuring compliance - digital reporting of inspections, mobile apps for consumers to report unhygienic practices, and GPS tracking of food distribution chains can increase accountability.

Moreover, consumer responsibility cannot be ignored. People must make informed choices, demand better quality, and report violations when they see them. Public awareness is the most effective check on unscrupulous behavior. Media, civil society, and educational institutions must work together to create a culture where food safety is treated as a non-negotiable priority.

At a policy level, stricter laws and faster prosecution of offenders can act as deterrents. Fines should be hefty enough to hurt, and repeat offenders must face license cancellations or even imprisonment. At the same time, the system should support small vendors who wish to comply, by providing affordable access to clean water, waste disposal systems, and hygienic food carts.

A Firm Stand for the Farm: Why India's Agro-Dairy Sector is both cause and cure for tariff tensions

■ PROF. DINESH CHANDRA RAI

The recent imposition of tariffs by the United States on India has put a spotlight on the often-complex dynamics of international trade. While the public narrative may point to broad political and economic differences, a closer examination reveals that a key factor-perhaps the central one-is India's steadfast refusal to open its vast agro-dairy sector to U.S. products. This position, far from being a weakness, is a strategic choice. It protects India's millions of farmers and its cultural values, and it positions the country's own robust agricultural and dairy industries as the very engine that can overcome the economic challenges posed by these trade disputes.

India's agricultural and dairy economy is more than just a source of food; it's a massive network of small-scale farmers who form the backbone of the rural economy. With more than 86% of farmers owning small plots of land, this sector is a major source of employment and a crucial part of the nation's food security. This context explains why the Indian government has stood firm. During the Trump administration, the U.S. pressed for greater market access for its heavily subsidized agricultural products, including genetically modified (GM) crops and dairy from cows fed animal by-products. India's government drew a clear line, prioritizing the welfare of its domestic farmers and the unique social and cultural fabric of the nation.

The arguments for this decision are strong. On an economic level, allowing a flood of cheap, subsidized U.S. goods would be disastrous for India's domestic producers. Estimates from the State Bank of India (SBI) suggest that unrestricted U.S. dairy imports could lead to an annual loss of over ₹1.03 lakh crore for the local dairy sector. Such an outcome would not only jeopardize the livelihoods of millions but also dismantle a sophisticated, decentralized supply chain that has been built over generations.



Culturally and religiously, the issue is equally significant. India has strong, widely held beliefs about the welfare of cows. The government has openly expressed concerns about importing U.S. dairy products, which are often sourced from cattle that have been fed animal-based feeds. This practice is culturally and religiously unacceptable to a large portion of the Indian populace. This specific detail serves as a powerful defense, allowing the government to protect its economy while also respecting the deeply held values of its citizens.

This year, designated as the International Year of Cooperatives, India's government is doubling down on its commitment to its cooperative-based agricultural model. The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is leading a major new push, backed by a ₹2,000 crore grant from the Union Cabinet. This grant will enable the NCDC to raise an additional ₹20,000 crore from the open market. These funds are slated to provide loans to cooperatives for building new projects, modernizing facilities, and meeting working capital needs.

These initiatives are part of a broader strategy to empower the sector from the ground up, with projects like the Rashtriya Gokul Mission and the National Programme for Dairy Development also playing a vital role. By supporting the cooperative movement, the government is not only providing a safety net for farmers but also actively building a more resilient, self-sufficient economic engine. This approach is generating jobs, improving local productivity, and creating a strong internal market less reliant on the unpredictability of international trade.

The tariffs from the U.S., while presenting a challenge to certain export-oriented industries like textiles and leather, are not a fatal blow. By focusing on the strength of its agro-dairy and other domestic-facing sectors, India can mitigate these losses. The performance of these industries, bolstered by new cooperative-focused initiatives, shows they have the potential to compensate for any short-term export hurdles.

The Road Ahead: Fortifying India's Agricultural Future

India's forward-looking approach to its agro-

dairy sector goes beyond just reacting to trade disputes. The country is charting a course toward a digitally integrated, value-added, and globally competitive agricultural future. The "Digital Agriculture Mission" is already leveraging technologies like AI, drones, and satellite imagery to provide real-time data to farmers, improving crop management and yields. For the dairy sector, revised schemes like the National Programme for Dairy Development are focusing on advanced quality control, value addition, and building a more efficient supply chain.

The government is also actively promoting a shift from raw agricultural exports to high-value, processed food products. By providing incentives and financial support through the PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, India aims to become a major hub for food processing. This strategy not only increases profit margins for producers but also opens up new markets in regions like the Middle East and Africa. By diversifying its export basket to include millets, organic goods, and various processed foods, India is ensuring its economic stability is not dependent on a few key trading partners.

The trade tensions with the U.S. have exposed India's strategic resolve. By steadfastly protecting its agro-dairy sector, India has shown that its economic policy is guided not by short-term trade-offs but by a long-term vision of food security and farmer welfare. The challenge of the tariffs is also an opportunity for India to build on its fundamental strengths. The same sectors at the heart of the trade conflict-agriculture and dairy-are exactly the ones that will drive India's economic stability and growth, proving that a strong stand for the farm is the most prudent and profitable path forward.

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Local Youth Actions for SDGs and Beyond

■ PROFESSOR (DR.) VIKAS SHARMA & NANCY VOHRA

Even small actions, when multiplied by many, can create big change making International Youth Day not just a celebration, but a step towards building a better and more sustainable future. By giving youth the tools, opportunities and encouragement they need, we can create a future that is fairer, greener and more sustainable for everyone.

The idea for this day began at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998, where leaders discussed the need for a global platform to address youth-related issues. Following this, the United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 54/120 in 1999, officially declared 12 August as International Youth Day. Every year on 12 August, the international community observes International Youth Day (IYD), a United Nations-sanctioned platform to elevate the voices, ideas and challenges of young people across the globe. Established with its first observance on 12 August 2000, this annual occasion serves as a catalyst for renewed efforts aimed at youth empowerment, inclusive development and positive social change. In 2025, IYD falls on Tuesday, 12 August. The UN has designated Nairobi, Kenya, as the host city for global observance, in collaboration with UN-Habitat underscoring the day's emphasis on urban inclusion and sustainable development.

International Youth Day 2025 helps young people understand the importance of unity, cooperation and shared goals among the 56 member countries of the Commonwealth. It teaches youth that even though people live in different nations, they face many common challenges such as unemployment, climate change and

inequality that can be solved better when countries work together. By learning about the Commonwealth's values of peace, democracy and equal opportunities, young people are encouraged to take part in activities that promote these ideas in their own communities. This awareness also opens doors for cultural exchange, education opportunities and leadership programmes that connect youth across borders. As a result, it strengthens friendship between nations, improves problem-solving skills and builds a generation that is more informed, responsible and ready to contribute to both local and global progress.

This year's global theme is: "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs" emphasizes the crucial role of young people in driving sustainable development at the community level. It highlights that change often starts with local initiatives and empowers youth to be active agents of change in their communities by aligning global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with local contexts. This approach recognizes that youth are not just beneficiaries of development, but also leaders, innovators and key players in achieving a sustainable future. Looking beyond 2030 means keeping the spirit of the SDGs alive, improving on the progress made and adapting to new global needs. It calls for youth to stay engaged as innovators, problem-solvers and community leaders long after the SDG targets are fulfilled. It also means thinking about future generations, ensuring that today's solutions are sustainable and can stand for the next generations. By committing to long-term action, young people can create a culture of responsibility and leadership that extends well past 2030, ensuring that positive change is not just a temporary effort, but a permanent part of our society.

This year's IYD will also underscore the essential role of local and regional governments. Being the closest to the communities, they serve to create inclusive policy environments, allocate resources and establish mechanisms for youth participation in local planning and decision-making. By integrating youth priorities into local and regional strategies and fostering partnerships with youth organizations, authorities can collaborate with young people to transform their ideas into impactful solutions.

When local governments provide space for innovation, mentorship and civic engagement, they not only accelerate SDG implementation, but also nurture future community leaders and change makers.

This day highlights how the efforts of youth in their own communities whether through environmental projects, education initiatives, social awareness campaigns or entrepreneurship can contribute to solving global challenges. The day provides a powerful platform for young people to voice their ideas, share their concerns and influence decision-making at local, national and international levels.

Inspires more young leaders by sharing success stories, it motivates other youth to take part in social, environmental and community projects. It also reminds governments, organizations and society to invest in youth by providing education, skills and opportunities, ensuring they have the tools to create positive change. Thus, strengthening unity and global cooperation by connecting young people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds to work together for a better future. Young workers know that democracy is not just about elections. It's about participation, inclusion and collective action.

On International Youth Day 2025, there are many meaningful ways you can take part and contribute to the day's spirit. You can start by engaging in small, but impactful activities in your community such as planting trees, organizing a clean-up drive or hosting an awareness campaign about important issues like climate change, education or health. If you are a student, you can join school or college programmes, debates or cultural events that celebrate youth achievements. Online, you can share inspiring stories, spread awareness about the day's theme "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond," and connect with other young change makers using social media. You could also volunteer your time for a local NGO, teach skills to younger children or help in a community project. Even small actions, when multiplied by many, can create big change making International Youth Day not just a celebration, but a step towards building a better and more sustainable future.

Today's youth are not just inheritors of the planet they are frontline defenders of it. International Youth Day 2025 is more than a celebration it is a call for action. With the theme "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and beyond," it reminds the world that change begins in our own communities and that young people are the driving force behind a better future. Whether through small local projects or global movements, the contributions of youth today will shape the well-being, equality and sustainability of tomorrow. On this 12 August, let us join hands with the youth, listen to their voices and work together to build a better world-today and for generations to come.

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Accomplishing SDGs through local youth actions

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

As the deadline for achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, is approaching faster, various reports reveal that the rate at which progress is being made to accomplish 169 targets set out under 17 SDGs is not satisfactory. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 outlines 17 interconnected goals aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all. The SDGs report 2024 reveals that while progress has been made in reducing global child mortality, preventing HIV infection, access to energy and mobile broadband; it also calls for accelerating action in critical areas undermining progress of SDGs that include climate change, inequalities among and between countries, peace and security. The report further details the urgent priorities needed for stronger and more effective action to ensure that the deadline of 2030 to end poverty, zero hunger for all protecting the planet and leaving no one behind are achieved. With just five year remaining, current progress falls short of what is required to meet the SDGs and without massive investments and scaled up action the achievement of

the SDGs; a blueprint for a more resilient and prosperous world and the roadmap out of current global crises will remain elusive. The COVID-19 impact, climatic uncertainties, escalating conflicts among different countries has hindered the upward progress. Overall the 2024 Sustainable Development Report (SDR) DEVELOPD BY un Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) shows that on average only 16% of the SDG targets are on track to be met globally by 2030 with the remaining 84% showing limited progress or a reversal progress. Stronger and more effective actions are thus needed.

An important path towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and making them all inclusive is through localization of sustainable development. Localization means adopting 17 goals to the local context of each region by taking into account the challenges and opportunities of that region. This is because a 'one size fits all' approach does not works effectively. Every region has its own challenges and realities that have to be done away within that social context and with the resource available in that social system. UN Inter-agency policy briefs on accelerating progress on the 2030 agenda from

local to global levels: the critical importance of SDG localization also stressed on the localization approach to unlock the full potential of SDGs. Localization leads to customization through policies and actions that are relevant for each respective place, makes easier monitoring and reporting and results in greater collaboration.

In the present era, youth have emerged as the most potent and dynamic force that have the potential to take the lead in bringing about the much needed and desired transformation in the world. With almost half of the world population being 30 years or more, this segment is also the most educated and some have shown their commitment to change the world for a better. Their meaningful engagement in the developmental process can help create a more just, inclusive and equal society. Building on this understanding, the SDSN-actively recognizes the value of young people and localization and the World Youth Day celebrated every year on Aug. 12 in this year is celebrated with the theme 'Accomplishing SDGs through local youth actions'. The theme highlights the unique role of youths in translating global ambitions into community-driven realities. Youths bring with themselves creativity, innovation

and empowerment of communities with whom they work. With over 65 per cent of SDG targets linked to local governance, youth engagement is infact a necessity.

As discussed above, keeping in view the importance and the role of youth in shaping modern economies, the United Nations vide its resolution 54/120 endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth at Lisbon (Aug. 8-12) that August 12 be celebrated as International Youth Day all over the globe. Every year the International Youth Day is celebrated with different themes.

Back home, the country has now achieved the unique distinction of having the largest population of youths. It means we have a much large number of working age population and this is described by policy makers and planners as 'demographic dividend' for the country. India's working-age population is now increasing because of rapidly declining birth and death rates. India's age dependency ratio, the ratio of dependents (children and the elderly) to the working age population (14- to 65-year-olds), is expected to only start rising in 2040, as per UN estimates. This presents a golden opportunity for

economic growth. However, this growth will depend on other factors such as those in the working-age population actually working. The India's labour force participation rate is declining, especially among rural youth (15 to 29 year olds) and women.

This Demographic Dividend has been recognized by economists and policy makers as a potential source of significant strength for national economy provided we are able to equip and continuously upgrade the skills of population working in that age group. The government is also focusing on Youth and their skill development. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSD&E) and the objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood. In agriculture and allied sectors, government has started many skill oriented trainings aimed at nurturing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country. A large no. of youths have come up with many startups by which they have not only created employment opportunities for themselves but have created many such

opportunities for others also.

The World Youth Day gives an opportunity to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal and equitable engagement and around the world recognition of the importance of youth participation in political, economic and social life and processes. At such a critical time, when the whole world is being threatened by different challenges, the International Youth Day seeks to put the spotlight on youth engagement at the local/community level, at the national level (formulation of laws, policies, and their implementation) and at the global level. It also recognizes young people around the world demonstrating their resilience, collective action and creativity in responding to the various issues faced by the communities all across the globe.

This year the global observance of International Youth Day 2025 is taking place in Nairobi, Kenya, in collaboration with the UN-Habitat, a United Nations Human Settlements Programme mandated by UNGA to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.

(The author writes on agriculture and social issues)

YOUR COLUMN Menace of stray dogs, animals in Sunderbani town

Dear Editor,
Through the medium of your newspaper I would like to draw kind atten-

tion of the authorities towards the menace of stay dogs and Animals in Sunderbani town.

Stray dogs and Animals have become a threat to life of people particularly small school going children who have been attacked many times in the recent past by them. There have been so many cases reported in SDH Sunderbani regarding this dog bite cases.

Two days back also a school girl child was attacked by the dogs. This is a life threat to people. Particularly after sunset it becomes difficult for ladies and children to come out of their houses in the lanes. Many

times municipality Sunderbani has been approached to resolve this issue which has become a public threat but nothing concrete has been done in this regard. I would request the authorities to come out of this deep slumber do that no onto wards incident happens in near future and pass order according to laws taking services of animal husbandry department to get rid of this threat of dog attack on people of Sunderbani.

Madan Lal Narad
Social activist
Devak Sunderbani