



“Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.”

—Winston Churchill



Edit

Triumph of spirit & courage

Some stories rise above medals and records, becoming symbols of human courage and determination. The remarkable journey of Jammu's daughter, Sheetal Devi is one such story. Her recognition as the Para Archer of the Year 2025 by the international governing body for the sport is not just another award. It is a moment of immense pride for India and especially for Jammu and Kashmir. At just nineteen years of age, Sheetal Devi has already achieved what many athletes can only dream of. Born without arms, she has rewritten the rules of what the human spirit can accomplish. Using her feet, legs and shoulder to draw the bow and release the arrow, she has mastered a sport that demands extraordinary focus and precision. Her rise in the world of archery has been nothing short of extraordinary. Last year she created history by becoming the first female armless archer to win a gold medal at the World Para Archery Championships in Gwangju, South Korea. Competing in the women's compound individual event, she stood at the top of the podium and etched her name into sporting history. In the same championship she also won a silver medal in the women's team event and a bronze in the mixed team competition, completing an incredible set of achievements. The recognition as the best para archer of the year by the global body is therefore a natural continuation of a journey marked by perseverance and excellence. But the importance of this honour goes beyond the sport itself. Sheetal Devi's story represents the triumph of courage over circumstance. For Jammu and Kashmir, her achievement carries a special meaning. A region often seen through the lens of conflict and challenges now has a global sporting icon whose success reflects resilience and hope. Sheetal has shown that talent can flourish anywhere when determination meets opportunity. Her journey also carries a powerful message about the potential of persons with disabilities. Too often society tends to define people by their limitations. Sheetal Devi has turned that thinking upside down. By competing at the highest level and defeating some of the best athletes in the world, she has shown that ability is not defined by physical conditions but by inner strength. Sport has always had the power to unite people and inspire younger generations. Sheetal's achievement will undoubtedly motivate countless young Indians, particularly those who may feel limited by circumstances beyond their control. Her story tells them that barriers can be broken and that courage can open doors that once seemed impossible. It is also a reminder of the importance of supporting and nurturing talent in every corner of the country. Behind every champion stands a network of coaches, mentors and institutions that recognise potential and provide the right platform. Sheetal's rise reflects the growing ecosystem of para sports in India which is finally beginning to receive the recognition it deserves. Sheetal Devi is not just a champion archer. She is a symbol of resilience, determination and the limitless possibilities of the human spirit.

Working India

JOB CREATION CRITICAL

■ DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

India's challenge is not just job availability, but job quality. Unemployment and underemployment and whether the government has concrete plans to address the needs remains largely ignored. Additionally, there is a widely acknowledged disconnect between what the education system produces and what the labour market demands. Degrees often do not translate into employability. What measures either the Centre or states propose to take to usher in reform are unknown. Electoral politics tends to prioritise short-term narratives—blame, identity issues, or welfare announcements—over detailed employment strategies. Job creation plans, when presented, are often headline-driven (targets, incentives) rather than backed by transparent roadmaps, timelines, and accountability metrics.

In such a situation, a report titled 'State of Working India 2026' noted that between 2004 and 2023 50 lakh-odd graduates were added every year, while the number of employed graduates rose by only around 28 lakh annually, out of which 17 lakh were salaried. Obviously, graduate employment has not kept pace with education because of which educated unemployment and underemployment is a serious spectre across the country.

The share of graduates among unemployed youth (29-29 years) has more than doubled over the past two decades, at a time when India has made substantial progress in expanding access to higher education for its youth, stated a report released by Azim Premji University recently. Data showed that around 67 per cent of unemployed in 2023 (around 1.1 crore) in the country were graduates, up from 32 per cent in 2004 (30 lakh). At the same time, share of graduates among youth has risen to 28 per cent in 2023 (6.3 crore) from just 10 per cent in 2004 (1.9 crore).

An issue that has not been covered in the report is what percentage has come from the lower segments of society in relation to both the percentage of graduates and those who got employment amongst them. In both these areas, the privileged sections get maximum opportunities, as an established fact. The report has rightly emphasised on skill training, vocational and technical, to increase the chances of employment generation. The world of work must be made class and caste agnostic.

At a recent conference, Secretary of Higher Education Vineet Joshi, pointed out that India's education system is changing under the influence of the National Education Policy 2020 and employability and entrepreneurship are now being seen as essential outcomes. But it is difficult to agree with him as the recent budget has not given priority to education and this is evident from the rather poor financial allocation. Moreover, despite all skilling efforts, there is just 20 per cent annual growth in the last three years, forming just 0.3 per cent of the workforce compared to about 4 per cent in the U.K. and Germany.

At the same conference, Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhde, Chairman, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) stated recently that outdated curricula had long been a complaint from the industry and institutions had been forced to move towards more frequent revision and closer consultation

with employers. He and other experts called for continuous curriculum reform in tune with the changing demands of industry. In line with this, the skilling policy needs to be linked to broader job creation, specially in manufacturing and related sectors that can

absorb both graduate and non-graduate workers. He and other experts called for continuous curriculum reform in tune with the changing demands of industry. In line with this, the skilling policy needs to be linked to broader job creation, specially in manufacturing and related sectors that can

scientists, innovators and engineers and coders are creating new technologies and inventing new ideas in different scientific and engineering dimensions, this is just a very small part of the educated workforce. Beneath this layer of highly employable talent

One cannot but disagree with the poor quality of education imparted in colleges located in rural and backward districts. Moreover, the poor funding to these institutions has aggravated in recent years. Unless there is a strategic transformation, obviously through more allocation of funds in the education sector as well as making the curriculum more job-oriented and introducing more courses in this direction, there may not be any significant change in Indian education and increasing employability. The Lokniti-CSDS survey in 2024 found nearly two-thirds of respondents claimed getting jobs harder than five years ago. Many aspire to go abroad for education and better jobs but either lack the resources or opportunities. Moreover, with anti-immigration sentiments rising globally immigration options for India's Gen Z are getting fewer. Many young Indians acknowledge that the government hasn't delivered on earlier promises on 'achhe din' or created millions of new good jobs. However, a section credited Modi with strengthening India's global standing and projecting confidence about the country's future. Though a section of young scientists, innovators and engineers and coders are creating new technologies and inventing new ideas in different scientific and engineering dimensions, this is just a very small part of the educated workforce. Beneath this layer of highly employable talent lies a much larger group of employable talent struggling to find suitable jobs. Meanwhile, another side of the unemployment problem is the low payment that is given, even for qualified candidates. The salaries have not kept pace with recent times. On the other hand, though an increasing number of women have been joining the workforce, the payments given to the opposite sex are much lower than their male counterparts. The condition of informal sector workers is even worse. The crisis has been aggravated with political parties making false promises before elections but not giving sufficient attention thereafter. The critical situation of most states where industries do not find a congenial climate to grow due to various factors has further hampered the prospect of job creation.



absorb both graduate and non-graduate workers.

Thus, one cannot but disagree with the poor quality of education imparted in colleges located in rural and backward districts. Moreover, the poor funding to these institutions has aggravated in recent years. Unless there is a strategic transformation, obviously through more allocation of funds in the education sector as well as making the curriculum more job-oriented and introducing more courses in this direction, there may not be any significant change in Indian education and increasing employability.

The Lokniti-CSDS survey in 2024 found nearly two-thirds of respondents claimed getting jobs harder than five years ago. Many aspire to go abroad for education and better jobs but either lack the resources or opportunities. Moreover, with anti-immigration sentiments rising globally immigration options for India's Gen Z are getting fewer.

Many young Indians acknowledge that the government hasn't delivered on earlier promises on 'achhe din' or created millions of new good jobs. However, a section credited Modi with strengthening India's global standing and projecting confidence about the country's future. Though a section of young

needs to be taken up with all urgency. Primarily, as Raghuram Rajan, the former RBI governor rightly pointed out recently, there is a need to expand skilling massively, marrying traditional methods of skilling with modern ones, monitoring provider needs and customer experience and looking for constant improvement. Technological advancement must be inducted into skilling to meet global standards. There is a need to change attitudes towards working with hands, starting in schools. For this the government, both at the Centre and states should prepare an action plan, announcing incentives for small and cottage industries as well as the service sector where there would be considerable job creation.

Meanwhile, another side of the unemployment problem is the low payment that is given, even for qualified candidates. The salaries have not kept pace with recent times. On the other hand, though an increasing number of women have been joining the workforce, the payments given to the opposite sex are much lower than their male counterparts. The condition of informal sector workers is even worse.

The crisis has been aggravated with political parties making false promises before elections but not giving sufficient attention thereafter. The critical situation of most states where industries do not find a congenial climate to grow due to various factors has further hampered the prospect of job creation.

Steps to increase employment generation are not quite pronounced. However, the Union Cabinet recently approved spending Rs 33,660 crore (\$3.63 billion) to develop 100 industrial parks in joint ventures with state governments and a state-run company. This, of course, is a long-term plan which should have been announced much earlier and the government offering financial support of up to Rs 1 crore per acre for core and social infrastruc-

ture sounds impressive. But the time taken for these parks to come about is not known though it is understood to generate about 15 lakh direct jobs after all the parks are developed. This is not encouraging when job creation

Finally, it must be acknowledged that most political parties are still not according adequate priority to the urgent challenge of job creation. Prolonged unemployment and underemployment—particularly among the youth—carry within them the seeds of deep social unrest. Such unrest may not always be immediately visible, but its gradual accumulation can eventually trigger a situation that becomes difficult to manage or contain. Ignoring this reality risks not only economic stagnation but also a serious strain on social stability and public trust.—INFA

How Mission Karmayogi is rewriting story of India's governance

■ DR JITENDRA SINGH

Imagine a district collector in a remote corner of Rajasthan who has just been handed charge of an ambitious welfare scheme he knows little about. A decade ago, his only recourse would have been a dog-eared government manual, a senior colleague who might be free after three meetings and a lunch, or the distant promise of a training programme that might arrive in a year or two—if at all. Today, he opens his phone, logs on to iGOT—the Integrated Government Online Training platform—and within minutes is navigating a structured, competency-linked course tailored to his exact need. By evening, better informed and more confident, he chairs the first beneficiary meeting of the scheme. The change seems small. In truth, it is seismic.

This is the quiet revolution that Mission Karmayogi has been engineering since its launch five years ago—not with fanfare, but with the patient, purposeful work of building a new kind of civil servant for a new kind of India. To understand why this matters, one must first reckon with the context. India in 2017—the Viksit Bharat our Prime Minister envisions—is not a destination we shall simply arrive at. It is a destination we must build, brick by careful brick, through the institutions and individuals that govern the republic. And the single most important variable in that equation is not capital, not technology, not even policy. It is the capability—the trained, motivated, citizen-centred capability—of roughly 3.5 crore public servants who wake up each morning and make the Indian state function.

For much of independent India's history, the model for

building that capability was what might be called episodic: a young officer joining service would receive formal training at the start, perhaps a mid-career course here and there, and would otherwise be expected to learn by doing—and by watching. In a stable, slow-moving world, this was adequate. In an era of artificial intelligence, climate disruption, demographic pressure, and cascading technological change, it is plainly insufficient. The pace at which governance challenges evolve has simply outrun the pace at which old-fashioned training systems could respond.

Mission Karmayogi was conceived as the answer to this mismatch. Launched in 2021, and anchored institutionally by the Capacity Building Commission (CBC)—established in April of that year—it set out to do something genuinely ambitious: transform the learning culture of the Indian civil services from a periodic, compliance-driven exercise into a continuous, role-based, self-directed journey of growth. The shift, as the Commission describes it, is from being a Karmachari—a functionary who follows rules—to becoming a Karmayogi: a public servant animated by purpose, service, and excellence.

Five years on, the numbers are instructive. Over 1.5 crore government officials are now active learners on the iGOT platform—a figure that would have seemed fantastical at inception. Across more than 4,600 competency-linked courses, these officials have logged upward of 8.3 crore course completions. In the last National Learning Week alone, participation generated 4.5 million hours of course enrolments and 3.8 million hours of actual learning. These are not abstract statistics. Each hour logged represents a public servant somewhere in India—a revenue inspector in Chhattisgarh, an urban local body officer in Pune, a health worker in Manipur—investing in their own ability to serve their fellow citizens

better.

What makes the iGOT platform genuinely transformative is not its scale alone, but its architecture of access. It is available anytime and anywhere, on a smartphone or a desktop, in multiple languages, personalised to the learner's professional profile. Courses are updated every three to six months, ensuring that content on how to deploy AI tools in governance or how to navigate new financial regulations stays current. The platform, in other words, is not a digital library gathering dust—it is a living, adaptive ecosystem of learning. Consider what this means for a junior Anganwadi worker in a tribal district who receives a module in her own language explaining the latest protocols for child nutrition assessment. She need not wait for a trainer to travel to her block. She learns, and she acts. That is the democratic dividend of this mission.

The Capacity Building Commission, as the strategic custodian of this ecosystem, plays the role of architect and conductor simultaneously. It identifies what competencies are needed across the vast spectrum of public roles—from a Secretary framing national policy to a panchayat functionary implementing it at the village level. It sets quality standards for the nation's training institutions through the National Standards for Civil Services Training Institutions framework, known as NSCSTI 2.0, under which over 200 training institutes across the country have already been accredited. It works with states—all 30 States and Union Territories—are now signed on through formal Memoranda of Understanding—to create bespoke Capacity Building Plans that map workforce competencies to organisational goals. And through landmark initiatives like the Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme, it has brought large-scale behavioural training—the subtle but vital art of treating every citizen as the ultimate stake-

holder—to over one million certified officials.

This last dimension of the mission deserves particular attention, because it speaks to something that cannot be measured easily in completion certificates or logged hours. One of the deepest aspirations of Mission Karmayogi is a shift in attitude—the movement from a transactional relationship between the state and the citizen to one defined by the spirit of Nagarak Devo Bhava: the citizen as god, as the highest authority to whom the servant of the state is accountable. When citizen-facing officials—those at railway counters, at revenue offices, at health centres—were trained under this philosophy and citizens were subsequently surveyed, the feedback was striking. They noticed the difference. Not just in efficiency, but in warmth, in attentiveness, in the human quality of the interaction. In an age when AI threatens to automate vast swathes of administrative function, this human layer—empathetic, culturally aware, locally rooted—is not a redundancy but India's governance superpower.

The mission has also made a conscious effort to honour India's intellectual inheritance alongside its technological ambitions. Through the Indian Knowledge System Cell, traditional wisdom—in fields ranging from community governance and agriculture to finance and healthcare—is being woven into the fabric of training content, not as nostalgia but as living knowledge. The Amrit Gyaan Kosh repository, with over 70 completed case studies, is building a body of governance wisdom rooted in Indian contexts and Indian solutions. This decolonisation of the administrative mind—returning Indian public servants to a confident engagement with their own civilisational heritage as they navigate modern challenges—is one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's defining aspirations, and Mission Karmayogi is operationalising it.

SĀDHANA Saptah—the National Learning Week observed from the 2nd to the 8th of April—is both a celebration of this five-year journey and a recommitment to its unfinished work. The word Sādhana is apt. It means dedicated practice, the disciplined daily effort of one who seeks mastery not through a single act of brilliance but through sustained devotion to craft. As we inaugurate the week with a National Conclave of Civil Services Training Institutions, bringing together nearly 700 senior officials in person and over 3,000 virtually, we are not merely marking an anniversary. We are setting our compass for the next five years—towards a future in which every civil servant at every level is a continuous learner, a citizen-champion, and a confident steward of India's aspirations.

The goals of Viksit Bharat 2047—from universal health coverage to net-zero commitments, from digital public infrastructure to global manufacturing leadership—will not be met by policy alone. They will be met by people: by the district official who understands the scheme well enough to implement it with precision, by the urban planner who can deploy spatial data tools, by the frontline health worker who communicates a public health alert in a way her community trusts. Mission Karmayogi is building that cohort—not for tomorrow, but for the decades ahead.

In the long, luminous arc of India's governance story, this may well be the chapter in which the state finally learnt to learn.

The author is the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences; Minister of State, PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, and Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions