

REVAMP TOURISM

The tourism policy of Jammu and Kashmir needs a big overhaul not only to make the industry generate business round the year but also keeping in mind the changes in the scenario. The surface alignments – like the railway to Kashmir and new land connectivity in the UT has made many more scenic and historic places accessible. Tourism infrastructure must be build along the new railway line to Kashmir which passes through some of the pristine and virgin scenic spots that have so far remained hidden due to lack of direct access. Besides, J&K can also development some housing areas along the railway line to make tourism sustainable. Kashmir anyway is a popular tourist destination and doesn't need to be highlighted more from the official side. However, efforts must go into promoting Jammu's beautiful locales like Bhaderwah, and historic sites of Udhampur, Akhnoor and other places. The border tourism has taken off but would be better if it's integrated with other places as a package for domestic tourists. As a responsible entity, the government of J&K must immediate introduce measures to implement green and sustainable policies for tourism promotion. The recent announcement of implementing odd-even scheme for private vehicles to Gulmarg is one such initiative in this direction. Many states have banned use of plastics especially use of ubiquitous polythene to save environment. J&K is ecologically fragile and needs to put its act together on this front too. The government's policy of creating a buzz to make tourists flock to the UT all around the year is also a good initiative. This will boost the local economy. The Omar Abdullah government can study best tourism models from other states wherein the authorities are taking cognizance of the modern day tourists' preferences of experiencing new places and cultures in the center of their schemes. Besides, tourism not only brings in money for the locals, it also enhances people to people relations.

Archana Datta

A recent news story highlighted how machine technicians in a textile factory in Nagpur have been strapped with small recording devices during working hours to track their every action. At another textile factory in Tamil Nadu, several women workers wear smart glasses that record their hand movements as they neatly pack items into plastic covers. Many Chinese and US-based AI data solutions and robotics companies have been heavily outsourcing egocentric data collection to India's vast network of factory workers and gig labourers to equip the next generation of humanoid robots and physical AI systems. Another news story underlined that, for the tenth consecutive year, the number of newborns fell in Japan, and that the world's fourth-largest economy faces one of the world's lowest birth rates and an ageing population.

As major industrial economies encountered the challenges of shrinking workforces, as a potential solution to compensate for the 'missing workers', they moved towards automation, from specialised industrial robots for repetitive factory tasks to humanoid robots (HRs), adaptable to human-centric environments. Globally, there are about 4.66 million industrial robots in operational use, and manufacturing sectors have been integrating at a record pace of 162 robots per 10,000 employees worldwide (IFR). While global research projections for HRs indicate that from 2035 onwards they will be in massive use in highly unstructured working environments, such as in households or elderly services. By 2060, the total units in ownership (UIO) for HRs are expected to reach three billion, replace 20 per cent of the workforce in the industrial sector, and 50 per cent of the workforce in the service sector (Bank of America, 2025).

However the commercial scaling up of



industrial robots and its fallout on the labour dynamics caused concern among the development economists. A 2017 study by McKinsey Global Institute warned that up to 800 million jobs globally could be lost to automation by 2030. Notwithstanding, a study on 'productivity, employment and jobs' asserted that 'if used effectively, robots enable companies to increase productivity and competitiveness, particularly in the SMEs'. A 2020 global study assessed that the 'rise in industrial robot density of one percent boosts 0.8 per cent of productivity (Select USA, Dept. of commerce, International Trade Association). Further, a 2023 study, based on data from the Chinese Annual Survey of Industrial Firms, compared the labour demands of robot adopters with non-adopters, and found that 'deployment of robots enhanced human labour, especially the active hiring of female employees'. While studies project that in a robot-driven world, increased productivity is likely to boost in GDP growth by 10 per cent in the next decade, and up to 1.4 per cent annually over the next 50 years (IFR).

Nevertheless, many social scientists opined that 'such a transformative technology may apparently enhance various aspects of human lives, but can also deepen inequalities and further concen-

trate economic power (Korinek and Stiglitz, 2021).

'winner-takes-all dynamics' advantage the technology giants and favoured the owners of capital at the expense of labour, leading to greater concentration of wealth (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019; Korinek et al., 2021). While the developing countries are likely to lose out on the benefits of 'demographic dividend' and 'low-cost labour'. The trend of multinationals 'restoring' factories closer to their primary consumer markets is already visible.

The GE brands have recently brought back a manufacturing line to the USA, and are managing operations with the help of cameras, robotic arms, artificial intelligence and autonomous mobile robots. However, the counter view goes that automation will push developing nations into high-export powerhouses, as happened in many East Asian economies where the reduction in production costs triggered massive export booms, and an increase in local employment to handle the scaled-up logistics and management.

India, as a data-gathering destination, is expected to be in the global AI and machine learning supply chain. Industry experts predict that India's data annotation sector could exceed \$7 billion by 2030 and employ over a million annotators (NASS-

COM Publication). While the currently operating about 500 AI-specific global capability centres (GCCs) that are managing robotics data pipelines for MNCs, can turn India into a major intellectual property (IP) factory for physical automation. The local deep-tech companies like Humyn AI and Objectways, having access to highly synchronised data sets, could also help build up affordable humanoids.

A recent study disclosed that India's advantages of low assembly costs and skilled local engineering talent could enable it to manufacture humanoids at \$16,500 per unit, representing a massive 73 per cent cost reduction compared to US alternatives. However, on the flip side, the World Bank reports suggest that 69 per cent of existing jobs in India are under threat of being lost to automation as Indian labourers are essentially 'training themselves out of a job' by mapping their precise physical movements into datasets for foreign robotics labs, which could directly affect India's 490 million informal workers.

Many also believe that even if India becomes the owner of the actual robotic hardware and patents, it risks losing long-term employment in manufacturing and logistics to the very humanoids it helped to enrich.

Now, when the global integration of AI and robotics is reshaping geopolitics, economies, and societies worldwide and no longer remains only in the realm of purely corporate tech competition, the AI Summit 2025 rightly pointed out the need for international guidelines that promote AI as a public good. While the UN's Global Digital Compact (GDC) 2024, has spelt out the first multilateral roadmap for inclusive digital cooperation and global AI governance. Adhering to the UNGDC is essential for all nations to bridge the global technology divide, especially tech-rich countries that hold the majority of resources.

WHEN FEAR ENTERS THE STAFF ROOM, LEARNING LEAVES THE CLASSROOM

Sakshi Sethi

Education was never meant to function as a performance industry. At its heart, teaching is a profoundly human profession, built on trust, empathy, encouragement and the shared pursuit of intellectual and personal growth.

Yet an unsettling culture is quietly taking root in many educational institutions, where fear is increasingly replacing trust as the preferred tool of management. Teachers today are expected to navigate an endless cycle of classroom observations, lesson audits, documentation, performance metrics and evaluations. Accountability is, of course, essential. Schools must uphold standards and ensure quality education. But accountability without empathy soon ceases to inspire excellence. Instead, it breeds anxiety, insecurity and emotional exhaustion. Fear-driven management rarely announces itself openly. It is often wrapped in the language of "continuous improvement," "quality assurance" or "performance enhancement." On paper, these systems appear rational and necessary. In practice, however, when educators feel constantly watched, measured and judged, the workplace gradually shifts from being collaborative to emotionally draining. Teachers be-



gin to focus less on inspiring students and more on avoiding mistakes. The emotional cost is significant. Every classroom demands confidence, creativity and emotional presence. But a teacher burdened by the fear of criticism, humiliation or professional insecurity cannot consistently bring their best self into the classroom.

Students may never know the administrative pressures their teachers face, but they are remarkably perceptive. They sense stress behind polite smiles, frustration hidden in gentle voices and fatigue concealed beneath professionalism. Emotional states are contagious, and class-

rooms inevitably reflect the well-being of those who lead them. Genuine learning flourishes where curiosity is encouraged, mistakes are treated as opportunities and psychological safety exists for everyone.

If teachers themselves are denied that sense of safety, expecting them to create vibrant, confident learning environments becomes unrealistic. As stress becomes chronic, patience diminishes, creativity fades and emotional resilience weakens. Teaching gradually transforms into a mechanical exercise of completing tasks rather than shaping minds.

Burnout, meanwhile, is often romanticised as dedication. Yet education has never been merely about delivering content. Teachers mentor, counsel, motivate and quietly carry the emotional weight of countless young lives. This is why educational leadership matters so profoundly.

Strong institutions are built not on intimidation but on trust. Effective leaders understand that high standards and compassion are not opposing values. Constructive feedback strengthens teachers; public criticism weakens them. Mentorship develops capability; micromanagement destroys confidence. Schools cannot be managed like factories, where output alone defines success.

Teaching is relational work, requiring both accountability and genuine human support. Equally important is the culture of belonging. Teachers who feel respected, heard and emotionally secure are more committed, resilient and willing to grow. A sense of belonging does not dilute standards—it strengthens them by fostering ownership and purpose.

As education debates curriculum reform, technological innovation and policy change, one truth deserves greater attention: the future of learning depends as much on how we treat teachers as on what we teach students. Teachers are not machines designed to perform flawlessly under relentless scrutiny. They are educators, mentors and human beings. When fear enters the staff room, learning quietly leaves the classroom. Protecting teachers is an investment in the future of education itself.

Punjab needs solutions, not electoral engineering

Anil Anand

Electorally capturing uncharted territories to expand the BJP's footprint, the ends mattering more than the means, has been top on the party's agenda since 2014. Although the party recently registered a convincing victory in West Bengal, hitherto an unknown territory for the saffron outfit, though the story is still unfolding amidst cries and complaints of electoral manipulations, it failed to simultaneously repeat the feat in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. One at a time! Many feel that the powerful duo of Mr Narendra Modi and Mr Amit Shah would have run a greater risk of simultaneously managing the three territories hostile to the BJP due to its overlordship of Hindu and Hindutva agenda. Could be, under the circumstances West Bengal was the best pick than further antagonizing the southern India. So, the focus on West Bengal as the party already has strong imprint in the Eastern sector.

The coming set of assembly elections in 2027 includes Punjab which has rejected BJP, though it made some inroads in the past in coalition

with Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) under the late veteran leader Mr Parkash Singh Badal, in its solo attempts and had to be content playing a poor second fiddle. The political dictionary of the BJP in its present manifestation knows no such word. And the only strong driving force is how to win a race solo rather than running in a relay exchanging batons. First a word of caution on how not to deal with Punjab! Don't deal with Punjab with kid-gloves and shun political and electoral experimentation that could push the state again to the brink of crisis. It should not be forgotten that Punjab extricated itself from the bloody days of terrorism with great difficulty and at a greater cost. Not to forget, it is currently in the grip of worrying drug menace and farm sector distress with agitated farmers on the road. Economy as such is posing a daunting challenge. Punjab is definitely not West Bengal, though the two states have a glorious history of making sacrifices in the Freedom Struggle, and it is certainly not Kashmir. It has its own peculiar strategic, geographic and geopolitical positioning with a long history of armed struggles and wars against ma-

rauding invaders. Any "political invasion" would have dangerous consequences.

Let there be a free and fair election without any coercive attempt. Let the electoral battle take its natural course with free will of the people of Punjab. Draw a 'Luxman Rekha' even indulging in political machinations, with Mr Modi's popular slogan of "nation first" to be the guiding light. Every political party is well within its rights to plan electoral strategies and so is the BJP but with certain riders. The party has been making vigorous efforts since 2014 to make its presence felt in Punjab but with almost no success. Let the desperation not overtake everything else above all the national interest and that of Punjab.

This could be gauged from the fact that Mr Arun Jaitely contested 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Amritsar and lost. He could have easily won from any constituency in Delhi. In 2019 Hardeep Singh Puri tried his luck from the same constituency only to lose badly. The pattern was repeated in 2024, when India's former ambassador to the USA, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, entered the electoral

arena, again from Amritsar but lost. Fielding high-profile candidates without any credible local leadership did no good to the BJP in finding its feat. All this while their urban base (mostly RSS supporters) oscillated between BJP-SAD combine and Congress.

At crucial times they strategically voted for Congress in anger against either BJP or the SAD due to local factors. On top of this, Haryana chief minister Mr Nayab Saini has visited Punjab 70 times during the last few months. Supporting a turban (symbolising Sikhism), reports suggested he is also learning Punjabi, he seems to be out to strengthen the BJP's position among the OBCs with 31 percent population. Though he himself is an OBC but he has no standing in Punjab. However, the BJP, ever since, has gone on a different trajectory, which was glaringly visible in Maharashtra and now in West Bengal, to import leaders from other established parties and manipulate majority. This had begun two years back with senior Congress leader Captain Amrinder Singh joining BJP along with his close aides. Later, former Congress MP from Ludhiana and grandson of ex Punjab chief

minister Mr Beant Singh, who was assassinated by the terrorists while in office, was also tapped by the BJP bosses and was made a union minister via the Rajya Sabha route. On ground such moves have not brought any change to the BJP's fortune and instead caused their further alienation from the people. Captain Amrinder Singh is well past his prime and has been ignored, by his own admission, and left sulking by the BJP leadership. Mr Bittu has lowered his image in the eyes of the people of Punjab.

All other sundry characters who joined BJP from Congress, SAD or Aam Aadmi Party, are lying by the wayside. Under the circumstances Amit Shah's public proclamation that BJP will fight election on its own fielding candidates on all 117 seats, has to be viewed seriously. Such statements are usually part of his psychological warfare, but these also convey a possible design akin to West Bengal.

The contesting political parties particularly the ruling BJP, with its strong thrust on nationalism and national security, should not lose sight of the fact that Punjab is a frontline state with sensitive international border. An in-

stable Punjab, as was seen in the past, could be detrimental to the national security. They should also not lose sight of the fact that Punjab's economy is under severe stress, with mounting public debt and an economic slowdown that has choked local enterprise. The restive youth due to unemployment is another grave challenge staring BJP and other political parties in the eye, which they can lose sight of at their own peril. A unique multi-cornered battle seems to be on the cards across 117 seats as the ruling AAP led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, is distressfully fighting to retain its fortress. Defending its governance model against a multi-pronged assault, AAP faces a deeply determined Congress aiming to reclaim its traditional stronghold. Concurrently, the SAD fights for its political revival, while the BJP seeks to expand its footprint in the agrarian state. The election hinges on pressing economic challenges, agrarian issues, and whether AAP's welfare initiatives can secure it a consecutive term. Manipulations and machinations have little or no space under the prevailing circumstances.