

# Initiatives for New India

Anurag Singh Thakur

*"The world is the great gymnasium where we come to make ourselves strong."*

*- Swami Vivekananda*

**I**ndia has one of the youngest populations in the world with 27.2 per cent of the nation's population belonging to 15-29 years age-group.<sup>1</sup> A demographic dividend of this magnitude has the capability to uplift the nation and raise living standards for all. The potential to catalyse the social and economic progress of the country through the active participation of youth is limitless. The role of youth in nation-building is crucial in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with India playing a very important role with the whole world watching us.

The youth of the nation will be a critical asset for the development; key for social & societal change; and driving force for economic development and technological innovation. The Government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that the youth are sufficiently skilled to compete at the global job market. The global supply chain, services sector and economy as a whole have immense potential to hire young, educated, skilled manpower, and India is developing a huge pool of skilled manpower to cater to this demand. In addition to that, we have also built a robust ecosystem that nurtures startups and encourages the entrepreneurial spirit amongst our youth.

## Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Today, the youth of our nation are the biggest ambassadors and advocates of the flagship Swachh Bharat Mission. The Swachh Bharat initiative, more than a scheme or a government programme, is a citizen's movement addressing the genuine concerns of commoners and their pledge to address a societal issue head-on. Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has always asserted 'Jan Bhagidari se Jan Andolan' and any campaign is incomplete without the active participation of the youth.

As part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) under the guidance of

Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) organised various activities of "Swachh Bharat 2.0" programme from 1 October to 31 October 2022. This programme was organised in 1.68 lakh villages by undertaking 2.22 lakh activities of waste collection and cleanliness drives. More than 1.55 crore kgs waste was collected through Youth Club Members, Youth Volunteers and other segments of the society, out of which 1.54 crore kgs waste was disposed of. This work was carried out in historical places, community centres, schools, villages and other places in districts across the nation. People, particularly the youth, not only participated in the programme but played a pivotal role in motivating and encouraging others to join the programme purely on a voluntary basis.

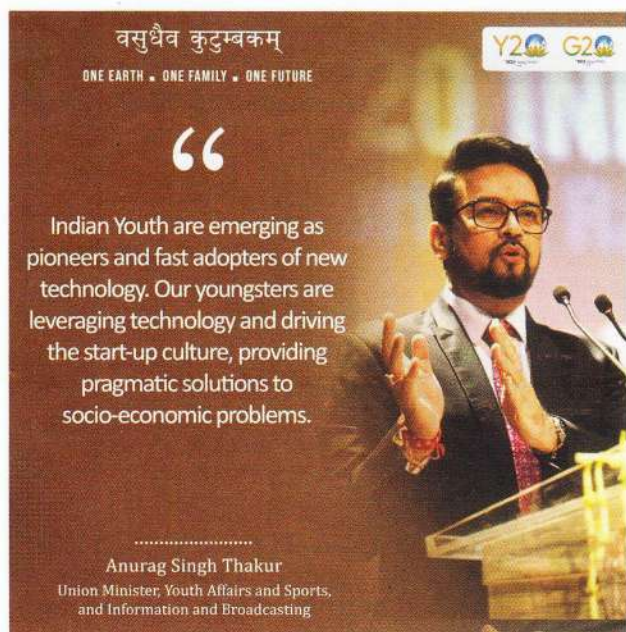
## Youth Volunteers

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has had a large focus to engage youth volunteers for the twin objective of personality building and nation building. While India is celebrating its 75 years of independence, we must pledge and commit to what we are aspiring to achieve and contribute during the nation's Amrit Kaal, i.e., from now to India@100. The youth has a pivotal responsibility to build the present and future of this country. My young friends are already involved in several



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central government and state government schemes for sustainable development of the country. I would further urge our partners in the private sector to promote volunteerism by creating new avenues and coming up with unique ideas to engage the youth for active and significant contribution.

The Ministry has launched a Capacity Building Training Programme for 14,000 Youth Volunteers of NYKS to enhance their life skills. These trained youth volunteers will play pivotal role in realising the *Panch Pran* (five resolve) about which Hon'ble Prime Minister spoke during his Independence Day Speech. Youth Volunteers played a significant role by successfully reaching out to 3.70 crore households and motivating around 9.38 crore citizens of India to hoist Tiranga on their homes; which resulted in over 2 crore households voluntarily hoisting Tiranga in their houses during 13-15 August 2022.

### **FIT India**

The Central Government is sparing no effort to bring in revolutionary development in the fields of sports, education, skill development and regional language education by bringing a new National Education Policy. I call upon the youth to be proactive and innovative, embrace new technology, make a strong network, and skill, up-skill, and re-skill themselves as a key growth engine of the nation, with India on the path of becoming the growth engine of the world. Today, universities and educational institutions are upgrading their sports infrastructure, thereby enabling the youth to actively participate in the FIT India movement to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle on the lines of the inspirational slogan 'Fitness Ka Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz'.

With the aim of promoting physical fitness and endurance, and reducing carbon footprints, MoYAS

celebrated World Bicycle Day on 3 June 2022 which was launched at the national level where I too participated by peddling a distance of 7.5 km along with 750 young cyclists and other dignitaries. Also, Pan-India Bicycle Rallies were organised by NYKS in 35 States/UTs, 75 Iconic Places across the country with the participation of 1,23,149 cyclists covering 8.06 lakh km distance. Bicycle Rallies were also organised by NSS Units in which 3,28,601 volunteers and others participated and covered a 16,43,005 km distance throughout the country.

The Inaugural edition of the FIT India Freedom Run was organised to celebrate our 74<sup>th</sup> Independence Day from 14 August to 2 October 2020 (151<sup>st</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi). This virtual run, where people could run at a place and pace of their choice, witnessed over 7 crore people participating. The second edition was organised as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav from 13 August to 2 October 2021 and saw a mass participation of over 9 crore people.

### **Sports, Education and Youth Development**

Sport is a great unifier and equaliser. It is a key driver for societal harmonisation irrespective of various differentiating factors including culture, language, colour and geographic boundaries. There has been a tremendous shift in the public perception towards sports with the Government's persistent efforts and impetus given to sports ecosystem that got reflected in the nation's impressive performance in the recent editions of the Olympics, Paralympics and the Commonwealth Games.

When the society overall, especially young kids, youth and parents get to witness the nation's athletes excelling on the international stage, and their success getting celebrated as the nation's success with the Hon'ble Prime Minister, who himself finds various opportunities to interact with the athletes personally; the morale of the society boosts up with more parents being open for their children pursuing sports as a career. More importantly, observing all the efforts of the Government and the corporate sector's crucial role to support nation's athletes, it is high-time for the society to realise that sports make for an attractive and rewarding career. Identifying sporting talent at a young age is advantageous since children best suited for a particular sport can be trained from an early age. To this end, more than 23 lakh school going children in the age group of 5-18 years have been assessed using the Khelo India Mobile App. More than 82,000 physical education teachers have been trained to assess the sporting prowess of children.

One of the key pillars of the Khelo India Scheme is to make quality sports infrastructure equitably accessible to the citizens. To ensure the same, MoYAS has sanctioned 294 sports infrastructure projects across the country, amounting to close to Rs 2,500 crore. Our Ministry and Sports Authority of India are in a mission mode, supporting athletes and other stakeholders in the sporting ecosystem through various initiatives under the Khelo India



scheme including establishment of district level Khelo India Centres, Khelo India State Centres of Excellence, organising annual Khelo India Games (Youth Games, University Games, Winter Games, etc.), community coaching development programmes (e-Khelo pathshala), promotion of women's participation in sports through women sporting leagues in various sporting disciplines, large-scale sports & fitness promotion events through the FIT India programme.

In addition to the above, the scheme has a robust early-stage talent identification and development mechanism through which talented sportspersons in various sports disciplines are identified and supported through out of pocket allowance and training support through Khelo India Accredited Academies. Currently, there are 2745 identified sporting talents across 21 sports disciplines (including Para sports) selected under Talent Search & Development. They are supported with financial assistance of Rs 6.28 lakh per year that includes funding for training and travel, sports science support, diet charges, medical expenses and out of pocket allowances. These budding athletes are being groomed to be our Olympic Medallists of tomorrow. A total of 264 Sports Academies (190 Non-SAI and 74 NCOE & SAI) have been accredited for training of athletes identified under Khelo India across the country. The identified athletes have state-of-the-art training programmes curated for them at these academies.

In order to constructively channelise the energy of the youth in extremism and terrorism infested areas of the country, sports competitions and programmes are organised in such landmasses across the country engaging the youth. To ensure inclusivity in the nation's sports development programme, persons with disabilities are supported through the Khelo India scheme in addition to promoting rural and indigenous games to re-energise the nation's centuries long culture and heritage.

The NEP 2020 envisages the holistic development of India's youth. To achieve the same, special emphasis is given for skill development to effectively attain AatmaNirbhar Bharat. Even the students of middle level shall be exposed to hands-on training in vocational skills like carpentry, plumbing, electrical repairing, horticulture, pottery, embroidery amongst other skills. We are also leveraging the power of sports to provide a holistic educational experience to our youth, to effectively build team spirit, mental agility, physical well-being among other important aspects crucial for development.

Integration of sport in curriculum as in NEP, is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach to leverage sports and physical activities for skill development including collaboration, teamwork, discipline, etc. The key objective of sports-integrated learning is to enable students to integrate fitness to their lifestyle and to promote physical and psychological well-being and to gain the related life skills along with the levels of fitness as envisaged in the FIT India movement.

The FIT India Quiz, India's biggest quiz on sports and fitness for school going children with a prize money of Rs 3.25 crore, was launched on 1 September 2021 as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. It saw participation of 36,299 students from 13,502 schools.

Amongst the various ways to enhance India's sporting success to multifold, states can be encouraged towards a "One State, One Sport" outlook where they are encouraged to prioritise one game (while not ignoring others) based on the available talent pool, natural interest, available infrastructure, etc. This will bring a focused approach and also allow for optimum utilisation of existing resources in the state.

Another major driver for nation's sporting excellence is to embed an active sporting culture. To achieve the same, it is important to organise games at local, district, state and national levels. The nation needs more leagues and competitions, at different levels on higher frequencies to increase participation and to provide necessary platform for young athletes to hone their skills and ultimately to enhance the sporting culture and ecosystem. Our university system, when transformed, has tremendous potential to create a large talent pool for Olympic excellence and to bridge the gap between interest in sports and participation in the long-term.

The Government is focused on nurturing India's young sporting talents, enabling and handholding them towards podium finish on the international stage. We will ensure all facilities and best training services for the athletes are put in place to excel in international competitions. Former athletes need to come up in the field of coaching to support emerging athletes and motivate them.

### Conclusion

The youth of India, while being the "Future of India", is more importantly "India's Present". They are the drivers of ideas and innovation in this age of AI- "AatmaNirbhar Innovation". A youthful mind, body and soul is the key driver of a healthy and fit India. They have a crucial role to play in nation building. More and more youth should come forward and work in rural areas, where they will get the feel of real India and its problems. The youth represent the most progressive section of society and have a transformational role to play in the vision of a New India. The youth must remain conscious about their duties and contribute to nation-building as a tribute to Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav to celebrate 75 years of India's independence.

With India taking over the prestigious presidency of G20 nations this year, it is an opportune moment for our youth to showcase their skills, talents, art, and exhibit their commitment and conviction towards the greater good of the nation. □

### Endnotes

1. Youth in India 2022 report, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)



## 26<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL HELD AT HUBBALI, KARNATAKA



The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 26<sup>th</sup> National Youth Festival in Hubballi, Karnataka on 12 January 2023. The programme was organised on National Youth Day which is celebrated on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, to honour and cherish his ideals, teachings and contributions. The theme of the festival was 'Viksit Yuva - Viksit Bharat'. It brings diverse cultures from all parts of the country on a common platform and unites the participants in the spirit of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat. The National Youth Festival is held every year to provide exposure to our talented youth at the national level, along with galvanising them towards nation-building.

This five-day festival witnessed the Youth Summit, which had plenary discussions on five themes stemming from G20 and Y20 events such as Future of Work, Industry, Innovation and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills; Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction; Peace Building and Reconciliation; Shared Future-youth in Democracy and Governance; and Health & Well-being.

Addressing on the occasion, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of National Youth Day in the year 2023, and remarked that on one hand, we have the exuberant National Youth Festival and on the other hand there is the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached," the Prime Minister

exclaimed quoting Swami Vivekananda Ji and said that it is the life mantra of the youth of India and said that we must emphasise and understand our duties to take the country forward in the Amrit Kaal. The Prime Minister highlighted the inspiration from Swami Vivekananda Ji derived by the youth of India in this endeavour. "I bow my head at the feet of Swami Vivekananda Ji on this special occasion", the Prime Minister remarked.



Champi Chikka

In his address, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports said, "The National Youth Festival brings out the culture and inquisitiveness of our nation, the inquisitiveness of its communities and its geographies". Reflecting upon the importance of sports and physical fitness emphasised by Swami Vivekananda, the Union Sports Minister said that Swami Vivekananda ji always believed that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body.

In the festival, several competitive and non-competitive events were held. Competitive events included folk dances and songs, held to provide an impetus to local traditional cultures. Yogathon with an aim to mobilise close to 10 lakh people to do Yoga, was one of the major non-competitive items. Other attractions included Food Festival, Young Artist Camp, Adventure Sports activities, special Know Your Army, Navy and Air Force camps, among others. □

Source: Press Information Bureau