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TOPICS COVERED

- Why is unemployment high among the youth? | Explained (GS Paper III: Unemployment)
- What happened to the bridge in Baltimore? (Prelims: Basic Information)

Why is unemployment high among the youth? | Explained (GS Paper III: Unemployment)

What has the India Employment Report 2024, prepared by the Institute for Human Development and the International Labour Organization, found? Why are educated youth also not getting jobs? Why is women participation in the labour force low? What are some of the correctives suggested in the report?

- The India Employment Report 2024, prepared jointly by Human Development and the International Labour Organization, focuses on youth employment, education, and skills.
- It analyzes Indian labor market trends over two decades, including the COVID-19 years, and highlights emerging challenges and the impact of economic growth on employment.

What are the key findings?

- The report notes that the proportion of India's working-age population (aged 15–59) increased from 61% in 2011 to 64% in 2021, projected to reach 65% in 2036.
- Approximately 7-8 million young people are added to the labor force each year.
- While the proportion of youth receiving education increased from 18% in 2000 to 35% in 2022, the percentage of youth engaged in economic activities decreased from 52% to 37% during the same period.
- Unemployment in India is predominantly a problem among youth, especially those with secondary education or higher, intensifying over time.
- In 2022, the share of unemployed youth in the total unemployed population was 82.9%.
- The percentage of educated youth among all unemployed individuals increased from 54.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022.
- Among educated (secondary level or higher) unemployed youth, women accounted for a larger share (76.7%) than men (62.2%).

Is the crisis the result of a lack of jobs?

- The crisis stems from both a lack of job opportunities and the unemployability of educated youth due to poor education quality.
- He emphasized the need for the government to separate skill development from formal education to address the issue effectively.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) and Institute for Human Development (IHD) noted that only 15.62% of youth had vocational training in 2022, with a mere 4.09% receiving formal vocational training.
- Mehrotra attributed the rise in agriculture sector employment post-2019 to the insufficient quality of education among youth, limiting their job prospects in other sectors.
- The report highlighted that the majority of jobs in 2023 (90.4%) were in the informal sector, with around half of formal sector jobs (45.2%) being informal as well.

- The youth unemployment rate tripled between 2012 and 2018.

Formal Sector

- **Characteristics:**
 - **Government Recognition & Regulation:** Businesses and workers are recognized and regulated by the government. They comply with labor laws, social security regulations, and taxation.
 - **Organized Structure:** Enterprises have defined structures, often with clear employment contracts, regular wages, and benefits.
 - **Larger Scale:** Typically consists of larger enterprises, both private and public sector.
- **Examples**
 - Registered companies and corporations
 - Government jobs
 - Workers in organized manufacturing or service sectors with formal contracts

Informal Sector

- **Characteristics**
 - **Lack of Official Regulation:** Operates largely outside government regulation, often without formal business registration or compliance with labor laws.
 - **Unstructured and Small-Scale:** Consists of small-scale enterprises, self-employed individuals, casual laborers, and work that often lacks fixed wages or benefits.
 - **Vulnerability:** Workers tend to experience lower incomes, job insecurity, and limited social protection.
- **Examples**
 - Street vendors, hawkers
 - Small-scale unregistered workshops
 - Domestic workers
 - Agricultural laborers
 - Construction workers

The relationship between the unorganized sector and the informal sector:

Key Points

- **Significant Overlap:** In the Indian context, the unorganized sector and the informal sector are largely synonymous. This means most enterprises and workers within the unorganized sector are also considered part of the informal sector.
- **Not a Perfect Match:** There can be minor exceptions. Theoretically, a very small enterprise might be formally registered but so casual in operation that it falls under the 'informal' category. Conversely, some workers on formal contracts might experience informal working conditions (lack of benefits, etc.). However, these are not the norm.

Understanding the Unorganized Sector (Official Definition: India)

- **National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS):** It define the unorganized sector as:
 - All privately owned enterprises that employ less than 10 workers in total.
 - This includes self-employed people, casual wage workers across sectors, etc.
- **Focus of the Definition:** The Indian definition emphasizes the small scale and lack of formal structure in businesses within the unorganized sector.

Why the Overlap with the Informal Sector?

Small, unregistered enterprises in the unorganized sector generally exhibit characteristics aligned with the 'informal' definition:

- **Outside Government Regulation:** They typically don't comply with labor regulations, minimum wages, or tax laws.
- **Lack of Social Protection:** Workers in the unorganized sector lack access to social security benefits like pensions, health insurance, etc.
- **Vulnerable Employment:** Jobs tend to be insecure, with no formal contracts or fixed benefits.

The Indian government actively works on policies to formalize the unorganized/informal sector through schemes that promote registration, access to credit, skill development, and social security.

What is the quality of employment?

- The quality of employment in India remains low, characterized by low productivity and earnings.
- Real wages and earnings have either declined or stagnated, with a significant proportion of workers not receiving the prescribed minimum wage of ₹480 per day for unskilled labor.
- According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Institute for Human Development (IHD), 40.8% of regular workers and 51.9% of casual workers did not receive the minimum wage.
- Central trade unions and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha express concern over the wage depression highlighted in the report, particularly amidst unchecked food inflation.
- Formal employment accounts for only 9% of total employment, leaving the majority of the workforce without access to social security benefits.
- Lack of formal employment opportunities contributes to unemployment and underemployment, hindering education and skill development for future generations.
- The report suggests that individuals with higher education levels are more likely to secure formal employment with better returns.
- Youth in southern, western, and northeastern regions have higher probabilities of being in formal employment, while socially marginalized youth are more prevalent in informal jobs.

Scarcity of Jobs in the Formal Sector:

- Trade unions attribute job scarcity in the formal sector to unfilled vacancies and a policy of allowing one-third of positions to lapse after retirements.
- The trend of contractual appointments and increasing reliance on consultancies is also blamed for the decline in formal job opportunities.

Gender Gap in the Labour Market:

- There exists a significant gender gap in the labour market, with low rates of female participation.
- The gender gap in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has remained consistent over the past two decades.
- In 2022, the LFPR for young men was nearly three times higher than that of young women, with similar gaps in both rural and urban areas.
- A large proportion of young individuals, especially women, are not engaged in education, employment, or training.
- Between 2012 and 2019, there was an alarming increase in unemployment due to decreased female participation, although this trend has slightly reversed since 2019.
- Young women are more likely to engage in agriculture compared to young men.
- Recommendations from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Institute for Human Development (IHD) include crafting policies to boost women's participation in the labour

market, providing institutional care facilities, adaptable work arrangements, improved public transport, amenities, and enhanced workplace safety.

Recommendations from the Report:

1. Five Missions to Address Challenges:

- Make production and growth more employment-intensive.
- Improve the quality of jobs.
- Overcome labour market inequalities.
- Enhance effectiveness of systems for skills training and active labour market policies.
- Bridge deficits in knowledge on labour market patterns and youth employment.

2. Integration of Employment Creation with Economic Policies:

- Integrate employment creation with macro and other economic policies to boost productive non-farm employment.
- Support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and promote decentralization.

3. Enhancing Agriculture Productivity and Non-farm Job Creation:

- Take steps to increase agriculture productivity.
- Create more non-farm jobs.
- Promote entrepreneurship to stimulate job creation.

4. Focus on Women's Participation in the Labour Force:

- Implement policies to boost women's participation in the labour force.
- Ensure minimum quality of employment and basic rights of workers across all sectors.

5. Rapid Integration of Youth into Labour Market:

- Address the gap between skill supply and demand through well-targeted supply and demand measures.
- Ensure rapid integration of youth into the labour market.

What happened to the bridge in Baltimore? (Prelims: Basic Information)



- On March 26, a container vessel collided with a pillar of a bridge on the Patapsco River in Baltimore.
- The collision caused a portion of the bridge to collapse, along with some people and cars on it.
- The incident resulted in six people falling into the river.
- By late March 27, the U.S. Coast Guard had completed its search in the river for the bodies of the six individuals.
- The container vessel involved in the collision had a crew consisting entirely of Indian nationals.

What is the timeline of events?

- The vessel involved in the collision is named Dali, which departed from the port of Baltimore at 12:28 a.m. local time.
- Dali, a 300-meter-long vessel, was en route to Colombo, Sri Lanka, carrying containers of oil and some hazardous material.
- Shortly after departure, nearby observers noticed the flickering lights on the Dali, and the ship's course began angling towards two pillars of the bridge.
- At 1:27 a.m. local time, Dali collided with one of the bridge's pillars, causing a segment of the bridge to collapse.
- The Dali's crew issued a mayday signal seeking assistance to control the vessel, prompting the Coast Guard and local authorities to respond and close the bridge to traffic.
- Part of the bridge's superstructure fell onto the vessel, damaging some containers and leaving them in precarious positions.
- Maryland governor Wes Moore declared a state of emergency following the incident.
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigated the collision and virtually ruled out deliberate intent to cause it.
- The Dali is owned by Danish shipping company Maersk and flies a Singapore flag. It is managed by the Synergy Marine Group, led by Rajesh Unni.

Will global forest expansion hit tribals?

What are the concerns about the Global Biodiversity Framework which aims to increase areas under forest cover, inland water, coastal and marine areas to at least 30% of the world's terrestrial area?

What is the situation in India?

- A symposium at the University of Arizona focused on indigenous people's rights on March 21-22.
- The symposium discussed the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- It highlighted concerns about how the GBF, along with India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023, will impact India's tribes.
- Many participants predicted adverse consequences for India's indigenous communities, particularly those affected by the creation of national parks.

What is the Kunming-Montreal GBF?

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022.

- It followed a four-year consultation and negotiation process and aims to support the achievement of sustainable development goals.
- The GBF sets ambitious goals for 2050 and targets for 2030 related to planning, monitoring, finance, capacity development, and scientific cooperation.
- One key target, known as Target 3, aims to increase protected areas (PAs) covering terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine areas to at least 30% of the world's terrestrial area.
- Currently, protected areas cover approximately 16% of the world's terrestrial area.
- New Delhi-based rights activist Suhas Chakma highlighted Target 3 at a symposium, drawing attention to its potential impact on indigenous communities and biodiversity conservation efforts.

What are its implications?

- Participants at the 'Symposium on Conservation, Racism, and Indigenous Peoples Human Rights' expressed concerns about the impact of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) on indigenous communities.
- They believe that the GBF's goals favor corporate interests over the rights of indigenous people.
- Examples were cited from Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Cambodia where indigenous communities face challenges in accessing basic necessities like housing, healthcare, education, and security due to conservation efforts.
- In Indonesia's Ujungkulon National Park, indigenous people have been denied basic rights, and in Cambodia's Beng Per Wildlife Sanctuary, an indigenous leader was convicted for cultivating on her own land.
- Participants highlighted instances where protected areas in Cambodia were reduced to accommodate private sector interests.
- Criticism was directed towards involving the private sector in forest conservation efforts, citing India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023 as an example.
- UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, José Francisco Calí Tzay, noted that protected areas were initially created for recreational purposes and hunting by colonial elites.
- Participants argued that concepts like ecotourism often reduce indigenous people to mere attractions, resembling animals in a zoo, rather than respecting their culture and rights.

What would GBF mean for India?

- Activists argue that meeting the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) will threaten the existence of indigenous peoples in India.
- Approximately 84% of India's national parks (89 out of 106) were established in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.
- Examples were provided to illustrate the potential impact:
 - Upgrading the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan to a tiger reserve could affect 162 tribal villages located inside and outside the sanctuary.
 - The expansion of the Nauradehi Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh may impact 62 villages, primarily inhabited by tribal people.
 - The notification for the Barak Bhuban Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, issued on June 19, 2022, could affect indigenous groups such as the Khasis and Dimasas.

- While the gazette notification claims that the sanctuary is free from encroachment and denies the existence of rights or concessions, indigenous groups like the Khasis possess documents proving their residency in the area since 1914.

What can be done to protect the tribal lands?

- Mr. Chakma emphasizes that while multilateral agreements like the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) cannot be amended, India needs to adjust its policies.
- He suggests several key changes:
- Recognition of Rights: India should acknowledge the right to free, prior, and informed consent, as guaranteed under the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act.
- Custodianship of Protected Areas (PAs): Tribals should be made custodians of PAs, recognizing their special relationship with forests and wildlife.
- Equitable Targeting: The government should not overlook tribal areas merely because they have less electoral significance. The low number of national parks in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, despite tribal populations, highlights this issue.
- Creation of PAs in Non-Tribal Areas: PAs should not be limited to tribal regions. Tiger reserves have been established in non-tribal areas without tigers, indicating a precedent for expanding PAs beyond tribal territories.
- Addressing Human Rights Violations: India must take human rights violations in PAs seriously. Indigenous communities within PAs deserve access to education, healthcare, and housing, which should not be solely under the jurisdiction of Wildlife or Forest Departments.
- Indigenous people residing within PAs play a crucial role in preserving biodiversity and ecosystems and should be respected and recognized for their contributions.