

# India Champions Decent Work & Economic Growth at Eighth South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on SDGs

## India's progress in Reducing Multidimensional Poverty, Employment in Economic Sectors and Social Protection Coverage highlighted

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Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, Ms. Sumita Dawra today chaired SDG 8 session on the progress of ***Decent Work & Economic Growth*** at Eighth South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on SDGs, held at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. This was co-hosted by the **NITI Aayog and UN ESCAP**.

Addressing the forum, Secretary (L&E) emphasized India's commitment to promoting inclusive economic growth and improving employment opportunities for all. India's progress in key areas was highlighted, particularly in improving employment rates, formalization of labour market, and promoting economic inclusion through digital tools. Secretary (L&E) detailed several government initiatives, including:

- **Inclusive Growth:** India's economic growth has accelerated, with GDP growth projections of **7% for FY 2024-25** as per recent **World Bank's India Development Update (IDU)**. About **250 million people** have escaped multidimensional poverty in recent years, reflecting the effectiveness of the Government's poverty alleviation programs.
- **Social Protection Coverage in Global Database:** ILO's World Social Protection Report 2024-26 shows that India has **doubled its social protection coverage estimate** and this technical exercise undertaken by India may be used as a model in South and South West Asia sub-region to reflect true social protection coverage of a country in a global database. Largest **in-kind Social Protection scheme of India's Targeted Public Distribution System** is well captured as a part of **special coverage** of ILO's report. Report highlights that it is one of the world's largest legally binding social assistance schemes providing **in-kind food security to about 800 million people**.
- **Employment Situation:** According to recent data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the unemployment rate has decreased from **6% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2022-23**, while the employment rate has grown from **46.8% in 2017-18 to 56% in 2022-23**. The rise of the service sector and the growth of industries such as construction, manufacturing, and logistics have also been critical drivers of job creation.
- **Formalisation of Labour Market:** With a focus on formal sector jobs, more than **64 million net subscribers** have been added to the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) in **last 6 years**. ELI schemes introduced in the **2024-25 Budget**, as part of PM's package of 5 schemes, reflects India's commitment to quality employment creation. These schemes, benefiting first-time **employees, rejinees and encouraging employers**, exemplify the Government's proactive approach to job creation

- **Leveraging Technology and Innovation:** India is harnessing the power of technology to enhance labour market efficiency. Platforms like the **National Career Service (NCS) portal**, which connects job seekers with employers, have become essential in meeting the demand-supply gap. In the unorganized sector, India uses digital solutions to social protection through **e-Shram portal**, with over **300 million registered workers**, it offers a **one-stop solution for social security access and welfare benefits**. The platform's **integration with key social security schemes** has broadened its support to gig and platform workers, with future plans to include **healthcare, life insurance, and skill-development initiatives**.

- **Labour Reforms:** India's comprehensive labour law reforms, consolidating **29 laws into 4 simplified codes**, aim to **improve working conditions, enhance productivity, and ensure better social security coverage for the workforce**, including gig and platform workers.

In addition to national efforts, Secretary highlighted progressive steps taken by India to **strengthen international cooperation**. As part of its G20 presidency, India is working with international organizations like ILO and OECD to develop **framework for mutual recognition of skills and qualifications**, thereby facilitating cross-border labour mobility. India's collaboration with the ILO to **advancing decent work practices in global supply chains** was also highlighted.

In her concluding remarks, Secretary (L&E) emphasized that country's employment scenario is set for **transformative growth, aligning with its demographic potential and positioning India as a key contributor to the global workforce of the future**.

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