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Eighth South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on SDGs

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Context:

India is making significant progress in promoting **decent work** and **economic growth**, as highlighted in recent discussions at the **Eighth South and South-West Asia Subregional Forum on SDGs**. The forum, co-hosted by **NITI Aayog** and **UN ESCAP**, brought attention to the country's commitment to **inclusive economic development**. Here's an overview of key highlights from the session chaired by Ms. **Sumita Dawra**, Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment:

Economic Growth and Poverty Alleviation

- **India's GDP Growth:** The GDP growth rate is projected at **7%** for FY 2024-25, driven by successful **poverty alleviation programs**.
- **Poverty Reduction:** Approximately **250 million people** have moved out of multidimensional poverty in recent years due to effective government initiatives, contributing to the country's focus on **inclusive growth**.

Social Protection Improvements

- India has significantly enhanced its **social protection coverage**, with the **International Labour Organization's (ILO) World Social Protection Report 2024-26** indicating that India has doubled its coverage estimates.
- The **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**, one of the world's largest legally binding social assistance schemes, provides **food security** to about **800 million people**.

Employment Trends and Statistics

- **Unemployment Rate:** The unemployment rate in India has decreased from **6%** in 2017-18 to **3.2%** in 2022-23.
- **Employment Rate:** The employment rate has increased from **46.8%** to **56%** over the same period, with growth in sectors like **services, construction, and logistics** driving job creation.

Formalisation of the Labour Market

- **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF):** Over **64 million net subscribers** have joined the EPF in the last six years.
- **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Schemes:** Introduced in the **2024-25 Budget**, these schemes are designed to **create quality jobs** and provide incentives to **first-time employees and rejoiners**.

Leveraging Technology in the Labour Market

- India is improving **labour market efficiency** through technology:
- The **National Career Service (NCS)** portal connects **job seekers** with **employers**.

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- The **e-Shram portal** has registered over **300 million workers** in the **unorganised sector**, offering access to **social security** and welfare benefits.

Labour Law Reforms

- India has consolidated **29 labour laws** into **4 simplified codes**, aiming to:
- Improve **working conditions** and **productivity**.
- Provide better **social security** for **gig** and **platform workers**.

International Cooperation and Global Workforce

- **India's G20 Presidency** has enhanced its international cooperation, especially with organizations like the **ILO** and **OECD**, to develop **frameworks for skill recognition**.
- This will facilitate **cross-border labour mobility** and promote **decent work practices** globally.

Transformative Growth in Employment

- India's **demographic advantages** position it as a **key player** in the global workforce. The government's proactive measures are set to transform the **employment landscape**, ensuring that India plays an important role in the evolving global economy.

India is making strides in fostering **inclusive economic growth**, improving **employment rates**, and enhancing **social security**. Through a combination of policy reforms, technological innovation, and international cooperation, the country is setting the stage for a **transformative green transition** and a **sustainable workforce**.