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- ❖ **India-Maldives Bilateral Relations:
Changing Dimensions**
- ❖ **Buddhism and Its Impact on Indian Society**
- ❖ **Indo-UK Strategic Trade Ties**
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INSIDE

Editorial	
Unemployment: Dark Side of Young India	5
<i>B.K.</i>	
India-Maldives Bilateral Relations:	
Changing Dimensions	7
<i>Dr. Alok Kumar Gupta</i>	
Buddhism and Its Impact on Indian Society	10
<i>Ningappa Somanna & Dr Shivakumar V. Uppe</i>	
Indo-UK Strategic Trade Ties:	13
<i>P. Ravichandran, P. Satheesh Kumar</i>	
<i>& P. Jaya Prapakaran</i>	
English: The Emerging Trend in Global.....	18
<i>Priya Sharma & Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Dwivedi</i>	
Transgender people's achievements in India	23
<i>Dr. Amitharani</i>	
India's Endeavor at Resetting Energy Profile:.....	27
<i>Deepali Kumari</i>	
Corporate Dividends and Legal Compliance:.....	31
<i>Dr. Raj Kumar Sah & Dr. Alok Kumar</i>	
Dynamics of Corporate Sustainability Reporting...36	
<i>Sourabh Kumar Pandey, Dr. Amrendra Kumar</i>	
<i>& Dr. Munshi Ram</i>	
Education of Women during Gupta Period	39
<i>Babita Kamei</i>	
Impact of Social Media Usage on University.....43	
<i>Donnipad Sandeep & Shaik Mumtaj</i>	
Educational Aspirations among Scheduled Tribe...51	
<i>Mahwesh Khan & Prof. Vimal Kishor</i>	
Norms and Time Lag in Payment	
within MGNREGA	55
<i>Dr. Jamaluddeen</i>	

Unemployment: Dark Side of Young India

India is young today, it sounds high, to the ears of every Indian. Undoubtedly, contemporary India is young because the working-age population of India is 15 to 59 years (Some reports include 15 to 64 years) of age is nearly 64.4% and is increasing. It expected to be 65.2% by 2031. There is the frightening side of the fact. This is the workforce that Indian leadership has the onerous task of providing employment. Moreover, the proportion of children (0-14 years) is decreasing. The total population of India has somewhere to the tune of 1.46 billion as of April 2025 which reveals that it has surpassed China and is now the world's most populous nation-state. The fertility rate has also declined as it is now below the replacement level of 2.1 berths per women which again speaks volume about the future of workforce in India.

India's youthful population makes it obvious that India is at the cusp of reaping demographic dividend, which means that the large working-age population places India at an advantageous position as it has relatively less population as dependents. The declining fertility rates and an aging population in certain states of India, could be a cause of serious challenge in future is the flip side of the demographic dividend story. However, for the present, challenges before the leadership at the Centre as well as in the states is to provide jobs to the workforce which is so huge.

The unemployment rate, as per the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, stands at 5.6% in June 2025. This statistic has been released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The survey also reveals that the rate of rural unemployment has decreased from 5.1% to 4.9%, while urban unemployment has experienced an increase from 6.9% to 7.1%. Thus, the overall unemployment rate for individuals above the age of 15 is 5.6%. This means the proportion of labour force currently without work that is actively seeking employment, excluding those who are not active.

The frightening side of the demographic dividend is that India's youth unemployment rate for 2024 was 16.03%. The jobless rate for age group 15-29 in rural India climbed to 13.7% in May 2025 from 12.3% in April 2025. In urban areas too, youth unemployment rose to 17.9% in May from 17.2% in the previous month. These are merely indicative statistics to provide the reader, feel of the status of unemployment in rural and urban India as well as overall in the country. Unemployment trend in India reflects a multi-dimensional crisis being faced by India and Indians at present, which speaks volume about the concerns and capacity of the government.

This is the situation when the definition of 'work' and 'employment' in India is not internationally compliant. Work without remuneration (or unpaid family labour, UFL) is called work by ILO, but Indian government treats it as employment. Fact remains, UFL is the worst from of work, in Indian context.

Possession of youthful population facilitates a country with potentials for accelerated economic growth when the share of the working age population (15 to 64 years) happens to be comparatively larger than the dependents and children (over 64 years and below 15 years respectively). Countries with demographic dividend can inject growth in its economy at an unprecedented rate. Estimates are there that India could have injected 8% growth per annum to reap the dividend. However, India failed to take due advantage of the demographic dividend which began in 1980s and is expected to conclude by 2040. India for a brief period from 2003 to 2015 experienced growth @7.8% which meant that demographic dividend was almost materializing. However, during 2014 to 2024 the growth rate has fallen to 5.8%. Most international agencies have predicted India's growth rate to be somewhere 6.7%, which is lower than the required rate. Slow growth rate by all means is bound to be detrimental to unemployment.

Working-age population is on the rise but failing to join the workforce, which is an unwelcome sign for an economy that boosts itself to be the fourth-largest in the world. Thus, the quest for sustainable job is urgent as growing rate of unemployment in the country is alarming and would create more social and political upheavals within the polity. In 2018, for 62 posts of peons in Uttar Pradesh, 93,000 applications were received that included 3,700 PhDs holders, 50,000 graduates, and 28,000 Post Graduates while the minimum eligibility was Class V. Therefore, if one takes underemployment into account the scenario would be more heartening in the Indian context.

—BK