

# Create more jobs, revamp employment policy

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## The Government's 10 lakh jobs creation plan does not appear to have factored in the ground realities.

The Government of India has recently announced its plan to create 10 lakh government jobs in the next 18 months. Of about 40 lakh sanctioned posts, 22% posts are now vacant and the Government will fill these posts in 18 months.

Though the announcement has been called a “historic step in the interest of the youth” and as “raising a new hope and confidence among youth” by some top Government leaders, the plan has serious problems.

### Vacancies are much higher

The first question is: how is the Government managing now in the absence of more than a fifth of the required number of staff? There are as many as 8.72 lakh positions that were vacant in various departments of the Central government, as told by the Minister of State in Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Jitendra Singh, to the Rajya Sabha on February 3, 2022. If various positions in public sector banks, the defence forces and police, the health sector, central schools and central universities, and the judiciary are added, then the number touches about 30 lakh posts. This number does not include vacancies in State government jobs. As sanctioned posts broadly indicate the required posts needed to run a government, it appears that this government is perhaps facing a serious shortage of staff, which is then causing long delays in work, corruption and maybe other inefficiencies.

The Government, however, has not made any complaints about such shortages in recent years. Why then has it made this sudden announcement? Is it because the Government is concerned about youth unemployment? Or is it because it wants to fill the required posts? Or, is it because elections are due in a number of States?

### ‘Quality’ as issue

Another major concern is about the quality of employment that will be generated through this plan. The share of contract workers in total government employment has been increasing rapidly in recent years — from 11.11 lakh in 2017 to 13.25 lakh in 2020 and to 24.31 lakh in 2021. In addition,

there are “honorary workers” such as Anganvadi workers, their helpers, accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers, etc. These employees of the government earn a lower salary (consolidated wages), and are not entitled to “decent work” conditions (International Labour Organization recommendations) including a minimum package of social security.

The Government must ensure that the employment generated under its plan will be of a standard quality. There has been no assurance so far on this by the Government.

### **More jobs are needed**

The total labour force in the country stands at 437.2 million (April 2022 data). At a labour force participation rate of 42.13% (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd.) the unemployment rate of the youth is about 20% at present. Given the backlog of about 30 million unemployed people and an annual addition of 50 lakh-70 lakh workers every year (World Bank), the dimensions of India’s unemployment problem today are formidable. The generation of a mere 10 lakh jobs in the next 18 months is too little. This scheme of the Government will hardly provide any relief to the youth of the country; and will not have much of an impact on the present unemployment problem.

It is important to note here that the performance of the private sector in creating employment opportunities has remained dismal. Currently, when the economy is still struggling to overcome the shocks caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, and when private final consumption expenditure has not crossed the pre-pandemic level, private firms are being seen to be managing their profit margin by cutting costs (in the form of rationalising wage bills). In this situation it is all the more important for the Government to ensure as many jobs as possible.

### **Focus on basis needs**

As is claimed, if the Government is really in ‘mission mode’ to provide employment to the unemployed, and to the youth, it will have to do much more than what has been announced. To start with, the Government will have to create more employment within the Government. Recent national and international reports and rankings have shown that India is lagging far behind most other countries in terms of health and nutrition, particularly women and children, in education, literacy and skills, holistic care of children in early childhood and later; drinking water and sanitation, and other basic infrastructure, etc.

We believe that the Government will have to take responsibility for meeting these basic needs without depending on privatisation — at least for the bottom 40% of the population. The first task for the Government would be to take much better direct care of basic well-being, human development and human resource development, and the basic infrastructure of the bottom population without privatisation in these areas.

Another major task would also be to reorient the industrialisation policy to focus on labour-intensive sectors of the economy, and promote Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and informal production by ensuring better technology and higher productivity, providing finances (including working capital) and pushing further cluster development for all industries that have the potential.

## Urban employment

And, finally, considering the fact that the urban economy has been badly hurt by the pandemic, a carefully designed urban employment guarantee programme would be most desirable to create ample urban employment avenues for urban youth. This programme will have to be different from the rural employment guarantee programme. The urban programme should include: basic urban services, where the youth would get special training so that they can be absorbed in the mainstream economy; day-care centres set up for childcare to enable women to reduce their unpaid services and to ensure quality care for children; and infrastructural gaps filled in under construction work to facilitate quality urban life.

If the gesture of filling vacant posts in the Government is part of a mission employment, it will have to be followed by radical changes in the Government's employment policy. Let us hope that people of India will be able to discern the motives behind the gesture, and assess the Government's performance accordingly.

### Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Consider the following statements -**

1. The total labor force in India is 437.2 million.
2. The share of contract workers in government employment has increased to 24.31 lakh in the year 2021.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans. (c)**

### Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q. Throw light on the causes of unemployment problem in India and discuss what are the expected measures that can be taken to deal with this wave of unemployment?**

**(250 Words)**

**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**