



FDP held by AIU-USTM AAD Centre

Assam Rising, Guwahati, March 26: A Faculty Development Program was hosted by AIU-USTM Academic and Administrative Development Centre (AADC) from March 18 to 23 in an online mode focusing on the theme "Bridging Traditions: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Higher Education Curriculum". Faculty members from diverse regions across India, including Indore, Maharashtra, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and various parts of Assam such as Dulijan, Silchar, Bongaigaon, Mangaldai, and Hajo, participated in the event, alongside faculty members from USTM. The inaugural session was honored by the presence of esteemed individuals including Prof. Pralhad R. Joshi, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University, Nalbari, Assam; Prof. Neelima Gupta, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Dr Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya Sagar, Honorable Vice Chancellor Prof G.D. Sharma; Dr. Pankaj Mittal, Secretary-General AIU; Dr. Amarendra Pani, Joint Director & Head Research, Convener, AADC; and Prof. Amit Choudhury, Dean School of Technology and Management. The program featured distinguished resource persons such as Prof. S. R. Joshi, Professor Department of Biotechnology & Bioinformatics at North Eastern Hill University, Shillong; Prof. Rani Sadasiva Murty, Vice-

Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara Vedic University, Andhra Pradesh; Dr. Upinder Dhar, Vice Chancellor of Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya, Indore; Prof. Manabendra Dutta Choudhury, Department of Life Science and Bioinformatics, Assam University, Silchar; Prof. Saroj Sharma, Chairperson, National Institute for Open Schooling, Noida and Prof. Ajay Singh Rathore, Vice Chancellor at Shyam University, Jaipur, Rajasthan. Their expertise enriched the discussions, providing insights into incorporating indigenous knowledge into higher education curricula. Discussions during the program ranged from historical contexts to practical strategies for curriculum integration, addressing the importance of NEP 2020 and guidelines for incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education. Topics including Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), ethics, and methods for promoting "Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat" were thoroughly explored. The Valedictory program on March 23 featured a report by Dr. Monalisa B. Deka, followed by a valedictory address by Prof. Rajendra Prasad Das, Vice-Chancellor of Krishna

Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), who attended as the Chief Guest. Honorable Vice Chancellor USTM, Prof. G.D. Sharma, Dr. Pankaj Mittal, Dr. Amarendra Pani, and Dr. R.K. Sharma addressed the participants. The event concluded with a collective commitment to collaborate in bridging traditions and creating a more inclusive future, aligning with the vision of "Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat".

Five arrests, lingering unease, and unanswered questions after attack at Gujarat University

SPOTLIGHT

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

At 10.30 p.m. on March 16, Chisomo Tolani – a national of Africa's Malawi currently pursuing his PhD in computer science at Gujarat University – was studying in his room in Block A of the university's hostel when he received a frantic call from his friend asking him to come out. As soon as he put down the phone, he heard screams and other loud noises coming from outside. Worried, he and several others from adjoining rooms rushed out to see what had caused the ruckus on the usually peaceful campus, located in Ahmedabad's Navarangpura neighbourhood.

"We saw some people brandishing sticks and beating our friends. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but they were shouting and creating a commotion. Within no time, they entered several of our rooms and began vandalising our belongings. It was extremely frightening," he says, describing the violent attack

carried out by a mob of 20 to 25 people at Block A, which houses around 75 of the university's foreign students. All of them, belonging to different nationalities, reside in the three-storey building with about 50 rooms.

In total, 300 international students study at Gujarat University under the scholarship offered by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, of which 200 stay at the hostel.

"The mob had gathered to attack our Muslim friends, who were offering Ramzan prayers at night at the place they usually pray during the holy month," Tolani says, adding that the episode was a "traumatic event" for all foreign students at the university.

"It was a very scary night for us. We had to call our international office for help," says Mithun Chandromohonto, a student from Bangladesh.

The March 16 attack left five students residing in Block A injured. Two of them – nationals of Turkmenistan and Sri Lanka – had to be hospitalised. Of the three who sustained minor injuries, two were from African nations,



An outside view of the hostel block where the foreign students were attacked; (right) a student shows where the mob injured him. VIJAY SONEJI

while one was from Afghanistan.

Police action

However, Tolani points out that the policemen who reached the spot did not take immediate action. "What was very shocking to my friends and I is that the police did not start catching people from the mob the moment they reached. The people who had attacked our friends were moving around freely in the presence of the police. A few of them even left on their motorbikes."

On Sunday, the morning following the incident, a slew of videos of the mob

attack began circulating on social media. One viral clip in particular showed a few members wearing saffron scarves and raising religious slogans while attacking the students and pelting stones.

That morning, Ahmedabad Police Commissioner G.S. Malik and Gujarat University Vice-Chancellor Dr. Neerja Gupta visited the hostel and met the students. The senior police official told the press that he had taken "serious note of the incident" and promised "strict action".

After the news of the assault made national headlines, the police regis-



tered a case under sections of the Indian Penal Code relating to unlawful assembly, rioting, voluntarily causing hurt, and criminal trespass. The case has been handed over to the Crime Branch.

So far, only five arrests have been made – Hitesh Mewada, Bharat Patel, Kshitij Pandey, Jitendra Patel, and Sahil Dudhtuwa. All are outsiders, and, with the exception of Pandey, residents of Ahmedabad. Pandey is a resident of Gandhidham and works in Ahmedabad.

In the FIR lodged by the police, none of the arrested persons have been iden-

tified as being associated with any right-wing outfit.

Simmering tensions

After the arrests and the interrogation of several students from the hostel's Block B, it emerged that frictions between the foreign and local students had been developing for some time.

"There had been some altercations between foreign students and some locals ever since the Muslim students began praying in the hostel. It's possible some local students sought the help of outsiders to plan an attack," a police official involved with the

probe says.

The police are also examining other possible triggers, like the consumption of non-vegetarian food, which was allegedly another matter of contention between the locals and foreigners. The foreign students have, however, rejected this theory, and hold that the offering of *namaz* was the only trigger.

"I have been here for more than two years. The food was not the trigger," Tolani says.

"Those who were praying got angry and started arguing back with the locals," says Tahamina, a Bangladeshi student.

Damage control

After the violence, university authorities removed the coordinator of the Study Abroad Programme, and within three days, all foreign students were shifted to a new hostel block equipped with round-the-clock security.

"Besides the police probe, we have launched our own internal investigation into the matter," the Vice-Chancellor says.

Officials from the Union Ministry of External Affairs also dialled top officials in

Gandhinagar over the international ramifications of the incident, and demanded swift police action.

"This episode has tarnished our image, and we have to work to ensure that it is never repeated. We have never even had a minor scuffle on the campus since 2005. Even during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, there were almost 400 foreign students here, and during Ramzan, the varsity made special arrangements to deliver fruit to the Muslim students at 4 a.m. in the morning," the Vice-Chancellor says.

The police, however, are still tight-lipped. "We cannot divulge any details at this stage," a senior officer tells *The Hindu*.

But some students still dwell on the alleged inactivity on the part of the police when the violence unfolded. "It's a puzzle for us as to why the policemen initially behaved like mute spectators when the mob went on the rampage," says Tolani, falling silent when asked if he thinks a police probe will unveil the truth and deliver justice.

LINK TO FULL STORY
» <https://rb.gy/8K5p6p>

Now, boys can learn Mohiniyattam at Kalamandalam

Decision taken unanimously in the governing council meeting of the deemed university for arts and culture in Kerala; move comes in the wake of Kalamandalam Sathyabhama's purported remarks against dancer R.L.V. Ramakrishnan

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

In a historic move, Kerala Kalamandalam, a deemed university for arts and culture, has opened its doors for boys to learn Mohiniyattam. The institution has lifted gender restrictions to enrol in its Mohiniyattam courses.

The decision was taken unanimously in the governing council meeting of the Kalamandalam on Wednesday. The admission for the Mohiniyattam course will be open from next academic year onwards.

The decision came in the wake of a controversy in which dancer Kalamandalam Sathyabhama allegedly made derogatory remarks against dancer R.L.V. Ramakrishnan.

A Mohiniyattam performance of Mr. Ramakrishnan was organised at the Koothambalam of Kalamandalam by the Kalamandalam Students Union on Tuesday.

The decision allowing boys to join the Mohiniyattam course came the very next day of the performance. Kalamandalam provides opportunity for learning

Mohiniyattam up to the postgraduate level.

The comments by Ms. Sathyabhama had sparked criticism from various fields across the State.

The Kerala State Human Rights Commission and State SC/ST commissions have initiated cases against Ms. Sathyabhama.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ramakrishnan has lodged a complaint with the Chalakudy police against Ms. Sathyabhama.

As the incident occurred in Thiruvananthapuram, the complaint will be transferred to the capital, according to the Chalakudy police.



Graceful dance: A file photo of R.L.V. Ramakrishnan during a Mohiniyattam performance in Kerala.

When images speak: why it is difficult not to judge a book by its cover

Publishers experiment with colours, paintings, typography, illustrations, graphic design and even film stills to promote books. Sometimes multiple editions with different covers are brought out, but to find out the quality of a book, the statutory warning should be: always read

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

Never judge a book by its cover', remains an old maxim. Yet, a reader's first organic point of contact with a tome is its cover, be it the visual recognition of that wrapping page or the rational expectation of what may lie in store within those flaps.

Covers with their visual stimuli goads us into a tactile pursuit. We hold the book, observe the cover, read the title and then flip to see the blurbs on the back. At times there is an olfactory indulgence too as a few of us smell the book with its notes of sawdust and faint traces of ink.

This is our endeavour to figure out whether what we hold is hot off the press or something imbued with age, dog-ears and the odd silverfish burrowing in. The cover stays vital and judgements are made.

Within the Indian context, Harper Perennial, which issues English translations of Indian vernacular classics, caught the eye with the way the publisher added a lovely touch to the covers.

Eye on aesthetics

Vivek Shanbhag's Kannada masterpiece *Ghachar Ghochar*, translated by Srinath Perur, had a simple cover high on

aesthetics. There was the title credit and on the fringes and sides, a collage of the Kannada alphabets were laid out. It is a template that Harper Perennial has used for its entire translation series with the alphabets linked to the author's mother-tongue and all shaded with different colours. It could be green for one book, yellow for another and the third could have the letters in purple. The feel is earthy, like traditional curry left simmering in clay pots by our grandmothers.

Book covers arrive in many types. All of us are exposed to vintage publications with their dark covers and their tinge of rust-brown and dark-red tropes. Penguin, worldwide, used to have a black spine and a black frame on the cover with the title placed in the centre with its white base. These packaging efforts became a subject of research in Phil Baines' *Penguin by Design, A Cover Story 1935-2005*.

These old covers are perhaps our first link to books, be it in a home library or at college. Usually the reputation of the book prevails and be it Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* or Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, you would reach out even if the cover is like those curtains in old cinema theatres, bland, dark and just doing its job. Even now these covers remain in vogue and for proof, just

saunter into any neighbourhood bookshop and head to its classics section.

Just as paper, a product of sighing trees, evolved into different types ranging from the plain to glossy, covers too evolved and acquired character. An image became essential to make the book stand out among its papyrus cousins. A century back or even a few decades ago, the cover was often a painting hinting at what lies in store.

Hat-tip to illustrators

Take for instance John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*. Its old cover features a lady with a hat, leaning backwards into a wooden pillar. The effect is pastoral and it sets you up for some literary foraging.

Even Gabriel Garcia Marquez's classics had covers that featured illustrations. Vintage Publications offering the Latin master's classics in their old iteration along with newer packaged versions, is actually a hat-tip to the illustrators and designers of a bygone era, plus it taps into our sense of nostalgia.

Closer home, we had R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, with the cover striking the right feel thanks to deft touches by the author's cartoonist brother R. K. Laxman. The output exuded childhood's magic laced with a naughty streak. Just as covers began to break into

three patterns – classical, painting-laced or just a bold type with a bright palette as base, another type emerged which leant on photographs.

Often autobiographies lean on the subject's face and it is the same with a few books of famous writers. Like for instance Ruskin Bond, who as a younger version is holding a cat in a black and white montage or is smiling into the camera with 89 summers blessing his visage. Then there are these atmospheric covers too like *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Complete Novels and Stories* by Arthur Conan Doyle, in which the detective striding away into an old London street, serves as the visual magnet. It is a device used in modern day lore too as reflected in Amor Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*.

But the laziest endeavour is the use of a still from a movie that is based on the book. Be it *One Day*, *Nights in Rodanthe* or *The Horse Whisperer*, cinema is used to sell the book and it leads to another related query: What did you prefer, the movie or the book? This book-movie symbiosis altering covers happened with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* too as the old one was replaced with its filmy interpretation as Shreya Saran twirled her dress! The tales around covers are many but to know the quality of a book, the statutory warning should be: always read.

What ILO flagged on unemployment in India

The Institute for Human Development (IHD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) published the India Employment Report 2024 on March 26. The report studies the challenge for youth employment in the context of general economic situation in India. While the key findings of the survey are not new the release of the report is a good time to revisit them. Here is what they show:

Pandemic reversed some employment gains made in the past two decades

The report focuses on three periods: 1999-2000 to 2011-12; 2011-12 to 2018-19; and 2019-20 to 2021-22. In the first two periods, workforce (working population) and labour force those working or looking for a job) growth lagged population growth, resulting in fall in labour force participation rate (LFPR) and worker population ratio (WPR). However, in both periods, non-farm workers grew at a faster rate than overall workers. This has been reversed in the post-pandemic period, with labour force and workforce growing faster than overall population, but largely due to farm employment. Both these trends have been driven largely by rural women.

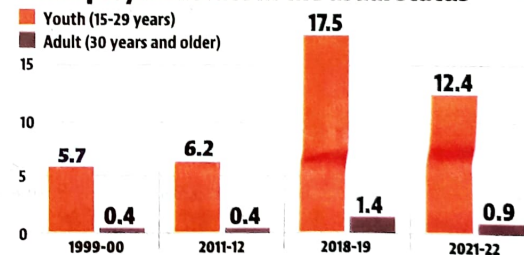
Compound annual growth rate (%)

	■ 1999-00 to 2011-12	■ 2011-12 to 2018-19	■ 2018-19 to 2021-22
Population (aged 15+)	2.39	2.07	1.15
Labour force (aged 15+)	1.54	0.56	4.62
Workforce (aged 15+)	1.55	0.01	5.29
Workforce: Agriculture	-0.39	-2.55	8.93
Workforce: Manufacturing	2.89	-0.33	3
Workforce: Construction	9.15	2.18	6.37
Workforce: Services	-0.67	10.8	1.09
Workforce: Total non-agriculture	3.86	2.09	2.61

Youth have much higher levels of unemployment than older adults

Those in the 15-29 years age group are classified as youth and those 30 years of age or older are classified as adults. This shows that unemployment rate for youth has always been more than ten times the rate for adults in the 2-decade period analysed in the survey. This means that youth form an overwhelming majority (over 80% in all four years for which report gives data) of unemployed people in India. While their overall share in unemployed people has decreased over time, the share of youth with secondary or higher education among unemployed people has increased.

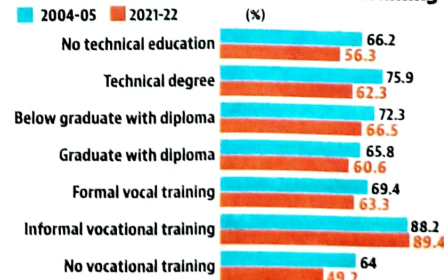
Unemployment rate in the usual status (%)



Education, unemployment not directly linked

The expectation from labour market data is that work participation will increase with education. However, that is not the case in India. WPR for non-student male youths is lower at the lowest and highest levels of education. The opposite is true for women. Another important trend is that while the share of technically qualified youth has increased in India, those with a technical degree experienced bigger decline in WPR than those with just a technical training diploma. To be sure, those with no technical education or training also faced a big decline in WPR and these trends need to be read with the fact that underemployment is a bigger problem among those less educated. This underscores "the need to address skill mismatches, enhance job creation and ensure the relevance of technical education to improve the labour market outcomes for both technically qualified and non-technically trained youths," the report says.

WPR for non-student youths, by level of technical education and vocational training



JOBS, STILL

New report frames the enormity of the employment challenge that will confront the next government

RECENT DATA POINTS towards the Indian economy maintaining a healthy growth momentum. In February, the National Statistical Office raised its forecast for GDP growth in 2023-24 to 7.6 per cent, up from its earlier assessment of 7.3 per cent. In its February monetary policy committee meeting, the Reserve Bank of India projected the economy to grow at 7 per cent in 2024-25. However, despite these growth assessments, concerns persist over the state of the labour market, and the capacity of the economy to generate more productive forms of employment. Data from the periodic labour force surveys has shown that there has been a steady increase in the labour force participation rate in the country. For those aged 15 years and above, the participation rate has increased from 49.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 57.9 per cent in 2022-23. Much of this increase has been due to more women entering the labour force — the female labour force participation rate has risen from 23.3 per cent to 37 per cent over this period. However, as the India Employment Report 2024 prepared by the International Labour Organisation and the Institute of Human Development points out, post 2019, roughly two-thirds of the increase in employment comprised of self-employed workers, “among whom unpaid (women) family workers predominate”. The report also notes that in recent years employment in agriculture has gone up, while the share of employment in manufacturing has remained almost stagnant. These are worrying signs that call for a closer examination.

The issue of job creation has been central to India's development project. The challenge is to generate more productive job opportunities — employment has so far largely been in the form of self-employment and casual wage labour — for the millions entering the labour force each year. The report has pegged the number of new entrants to the labour market at seven to eight million each year. However, currently, even as youth unemployment has fallen from 17.5 per cent in 2019, it remains high at 12.1 per cent in 2022. Unemployment is higher among the young people in urban areas, and among the more educated. Reaping the demographic dividend would require providing more productive forms of employment for these groups. This is going to be a challenge, more so because the production process has become “capital intensive and labour-saving”. As the report points out, “the skill intensity of employment in industry and services increased during this period, which was contrary to the labour market needs of the country”.

Over the decades, governments of varying ideological inclinations have announced measures to boost employment generation. And yet, progress so far has been less than adequate. The policy response has to be at multiple levels, from ensuring quality education and skills to facilitating large-scale labour intensive manufacturing to absorb the millions of low and semi-skilled workers. This should be the priority for the next government.

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

State of employment in India: what a new report says about youths & women, concerns & caution

ANACHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THERE have been "paradoxical improvements" in labour market indicators such as the labour force participation rate, workforce participation rate, and unemployment rate in India in recent years after long-term deterioration from 2000-2019. The improvement has coincided with periods of economic distress, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, says the India Employment Report 2024 released by the Institute for Human Development and International Labour Organisation on Tuesday.

The big picture

The report has flagged concerns about poor employment conditions: the slow transition to non-farm employment has reversed; women largely account for the increase in self-employment and unpaid family work; youth employment is of poorer quality than employment for adults; wages and earnings are stagnant or declining.

The 'employment condition index' has improved between 2004-05 and 2021-22. But some states — Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, and UP — have remained at the bottom through this period, while some others — Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat — have stayed at the top.

The index is based on seven labour market outcome indicators: (i) percentage of workers employed in regular formal work; (ii) percentage of casual labourers; (iii) percentage of self-employed workers below the poverty line; (iv) work participation rate; (v) average monthly earnings of casual labourers; (vi) unemployment rate of secondary

and above-educated youth; (vii) youth not in employment and education or training.

Employment quality

Informal employment has risen — around half the jobs in the formal sector are of an informal nature. Self-employment and unpaid family work has also increased, especially for women. Almost 82% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector, and nearly 90% is informally employed, the report said.

Self-employment remains the primary source of employment — 55.8% in 2022. Casual and regular employment accounted for 22.7% and 21.5% respectively.

The share of self-employment remained almost stable around 52% between 2000 and 2019, while regular employment increased by almost 10 percentage points, to 23.8% from 14.2%. This reversed by 2022, with self-employment increasing to 55.8%, while the share of regular employment declined to 21.5%. Casual employment consistently declined to 22.7% in 2022 from 33.3% in 2000.

Regular employment is generally seen as providing better-quality jobs due to the regularity of employment and associated social security benefits, while casual work is linked with relatively poor-quality jobs due to its irregular nature and lower daily earnings.

Participation of women

The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India remains among the world's lowest. Female LFPR declined by 14.4 percentage points (compared to 8.1 percentage points for males) between 2000 and 2019. The trend reversed thereafter, with female LFPR rising by 8.3 percentage points (compared to 1.7 percentage points for male LFPR) between 2019 and 2022.

There is a considerable gender gap — women's LFPR (32.8%) in 2022 was 2.3 times lower than men's (77.2%). India's low LFPR is largely attributed to the low female LFPR, which was much lower than the world average of 47.3% in 2022, but higher than the South Asian average of 24.8%, as per ILO data.

Structural transformation

There has been a reversal of the slow transition towards non-farm employment after 2018-19. The share of agriculture in total employment fell to around 42% in 2019 from 60% in 2000.

This shift was largely absorbed by construction and services, the share of which in total employment increased to 32% in 2019 from 23% in 2000. The share of manufacturing in employment has remained almost stagnant at 12-14%.

Since 2018-19, this slow transition has stagnated or reversed with the rise in the share of agricultural employment.

Youth employment

There has been a rise in youth employment, but the quality of work remains a concern, especially for qualified young workers.

Youth employment and underemployment increased between 2000 and 2019 but declined during the pandemic years. However, unemployment among youths, especially those with secondary-level or higher education, has intensified over time.

In 2022, the share of unemployed youths in the total unemployed population was 82.9%. The share of educated youths among all unemployed people also increased to 65.7% in 2022 from 54.2% in 2000.

The unemployment rate among youths was six times greater for those who had

completed secondary education or higher (18.4%) and nine times higher for graduates (29.1%) than for persons who could not read or write (3.4%) in 2022. This was higher among educated young women (21.4%) than men (17.5%), especially among female graduates (34.5%), compared to men (26.4%).

The unemployment rate among educated youths grew to 30.8% in 2019 from 23.9% in 2000, but fell to 18.4% in 2022.

The way forward

■ There are five key policy areas for further action: promoting job creation; improving employment quality; addressing labour market inequalities; strengthening skills and active labour market policies; and bridging the knowledge deficits on labour market patterns and youth employment.

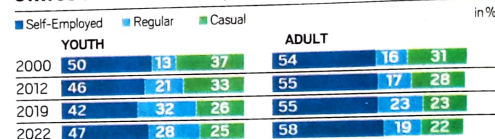
■ The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) could have an impact on employment, the report said, noting that the outsourcing industry in India could be disrupted because some back-office tasks would be taken over by AI.

■ Investment and regulations are required in the emerging care and digital economies, which could be an important source of productive employment. The lack of job security, irregular wages, and uncertain employment status for workers pose significant challenges for gig or platform work.

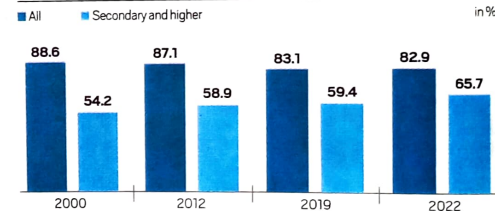
■ Economic policies are required to boost productive non-farm employment, especially in the manufacturing sector, with India likely to add 7-8 million youths annually to the labour force during the next decade.

■ More support needs to be provided to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, especially by providing tools such as digitalisation and AI and a cluster-based approach to manufacturing.

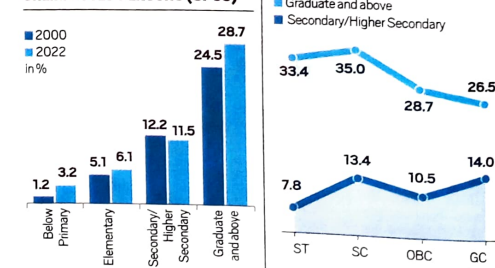
STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT (UPSS) OF YOUTHS AND ADULTS



SHARE OF UNEMPLOYED EDUCATED YOUTHS (SECONDARY OR HIGHER) IN TOTAL UNEMPLOYED PERSONS (UPSS)



SHARE OF UNEMPLOYED EDUCATED YOUTHS (SECONDARY OR HIGHER) IN TOTAL UNEMPLOYED PERSONS (UPSS)



Source: India Employment Report 2024, IHD-ILO UPSS: Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status

From margins to mainstream

Nexus of Good



ANIL SWARUP

Under the able leadership of Ambadas Chavan, Caring Hands—a voluntary organisation—is introducing positive changes in the lives of marginalised communities in Pune and Ahmednagar districts

Caring Hands, a Pune-based voluntary organisation, is making significant strides in transforming the lives of neglected communities. This transformative journey is embodied by Caring Hands, a voluntary organisation led by the indomitable spirit of Ambadas Chavan and a group of dedicated friends. Their mission goes beyond the conventional, reaching out to communities like Pase Pardhi, Bhilla, Dombari, Kalkadi, Ghisadi, Dhangar, Vaidu, Katkari, Thakar, among others, spread across Ahmednagar and Pune districts.

The backdrop of their intervention reveals the harsh realities faced by these communities. Often labelled as 'born criminals', they grapple with challenges that stem from historical prejudices. Ambadas Chavan sheds light on their initiation into this noble cause, focusing particularly on the Bhilla and Pardl communities. The journey commenced in 2015, and over the years, they have extended their outreach to more than 350 children throughout Ahmednagar, venturing recently into Thane.

One cornerstone of Caring Hands' efforts is the establishment of a rehabilitation centre, providing a haven for 82 children. Here, they receive not only shelter but access to essential provisions such as food, education, health services, and a nurturing environment that emphasises civilisation and education. In parallel, the organisation runs a short stay home for distressed women, offering counselling and reuniting them with their families whenever possible. An old age home for uncared elderly, currently hosting over 12 individuals, is in place, with plans for a larger facility underway.

The organisation's commitment extends to the realm of education, as they recently obtained permission from the education department to



Caring Hands has extended its outreach to more than 350 children throughout Ahmednagar, venturing recently into Thane

IMAGE COURTESY: CARING HANDS

launch a school up to the 10th grade. With a hostel facility for 400 children sprawling across 6 acres of land, Caring Hands envisions a holistic educational experience for the underprivileged. Their footprint has now expanded to Mumbai, specifically Mira Bahindar, where they provide refuge to children who have left orphanages and have nowhere else to turn.

Ambadas Chavan narrates his personal evolution, a journey that led him from an average farmer family to the heart of communities in need. His commitment intensified after joining an organisation in Ahmednagar post his 11th grade. Engaging in rescue operations, notably in red light areas across various cities, Chavan faced threats, challenges, and even exposed a sex scandal in 2006. The fight for justice, with the support of figures like Anna Hazare, marked a turning point, leading to significant convictions.

His educational journey,

spanning BA in English, LLB, and MSW, unfolded simultaneously with his relentless dedication to social causes. International exposure in Israel highlighted the stark contrast in tackling minor-related issues. A subsequent connection with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences further enriched his understanding and capabilities. The journey ultimately led him back to his roots in Ahmednagar, where he envisioned creating a positive impact.

Caring Hands' grassroots initiatives are highlighted by their Sanskar Kendra, focusing on vulnerable children. Recognising that adults were resistant, the organisation redirected its efforts towards children, establishing a doorstep school. The challenges were multifold, from unhygienic conditions to societal reluctance, but Caring Hands persevered. With the support of organisations like Doorstep School, they expanded to 10 schools in remote areas, ben-

efiting over 350 children.

Financial constraints posed hurdles, prompting a shift to Pune, where Caring Hands engaged with the children of construction labourers and initiated an old-age home. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed severe challenges, leading to the closure of certain operations. However, the organisation's resilience prevailed as they secured land in Talegaon, where they recommenced their efforts. What was once a dire situation transformed into a thriving haven, providing solace and support to those in need.

As Ambadas Chavan reflects on the past three years, he acknowledges the collective effort of the community. The organisation's impact extends beyond immediate relief, as they plan to accommodate more than 1,500 children in the next two years. Future projects include venturing into remote areas of Mawar, establishing resource centres for youth, and supporting tribal

women with initiatives like sewing machines donated by philanthropists like Kailash.

Despite these accomplishments, challenges persist. The bureaucratic machinery often impedes swift action, and the lack of documentation for marginalised communities hampers their access to government schemes. Caring Hands actively engages with authorities, advocating for policy changes and recognition that goes beyond grassroots efforts.

In a recent interaction at a Seminar organised by the Pune Chapter of Nexus of Good Foundation, Ambadas Chavan shared his vision for the next decade. He envisions Caring Hands not just as a grassroots organisation but as a policy influencer. Their focus extends beyond addressing issues to creating systemic change, particularly in policies related to migration. By advocating for the rights of migrants and ensuring their access to education and health facilities, Caring Hands aims to carve a lasting impact on society.

As Caring Hands continues its journey, the organisation seeks recognition not just for its immediate interventions but as a catalyst for broader policy shifts. The narrative of their work transcends the conventional boundaries of charity, evolving into a movement that envisions a society where every individual, regardless of their background, has an opportunity for a better life. The title "Transforming Lives: The Journey of Caring Hands in Empowering Neglected Communities" encapsulates the essence of their story—a story of resilience, compassion, and the unwavering commitment to create a more equitable world.

Caring Hands presents a wonderful example of Nexus of Good. Ambadas Chavan has created a model that can be replicated and scaled through public-private partnership.

Views expressed are personal

Breaking ground



RAAVI BIRBAL

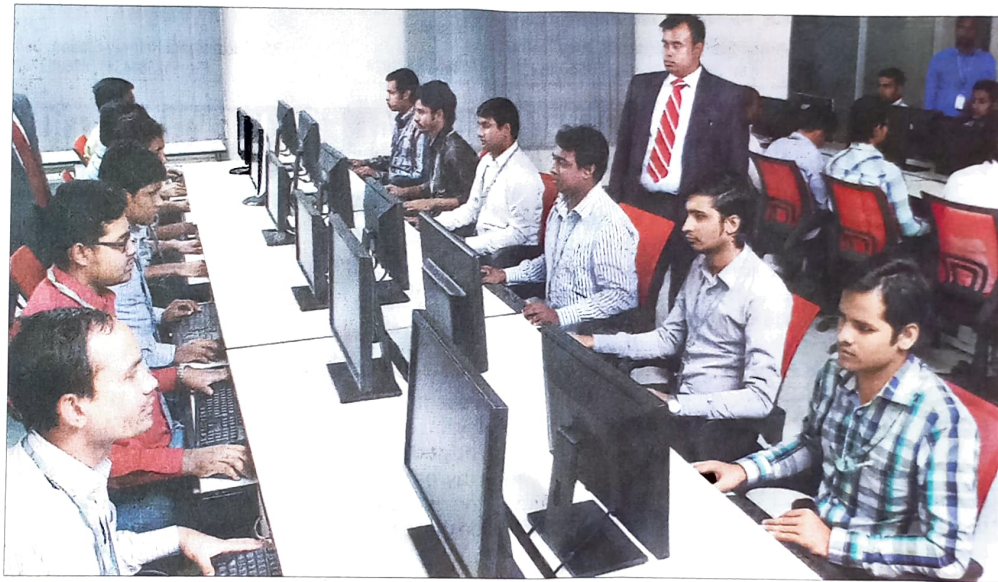
As India strives to adopt a 'living wage' to tackle employment concerns, recognition of persisting hurdles and requirements for charting out a nuanced strategy will be the key

India is thinking of transitioning to a living wage by 2025. It is indeed a well-thought-out and innovative idea that needs to be implemented following a middle path.

A living wage could be a game changer and a reasonable solution for many employment-related issues. For instance, while it is not feasible to grant regularization, i.e., permanent jobs, to the entire massive population, granting living wages in place of minimum wages, especially in government organizations and PSUs, could remove the frustration of unregularized workers. This could be extended to labourers—contractual, casual, daily, temporary, etc.

However, one size does not fit all. For certain entities in the private sector and in some places in the government—mid-scale, small scale, etc.—a steep rise may not be feasible. It is paramount that organizations breathe and not bleed. The Apex Court, in its various dictums, has held that wages should be fixed inter alia based on the paying capacity of employers. The capacity to bear the burden on pay pockets and other such factors need to be examined to see if the employers in question have the capacity to pay higher wages, benefits, etc., or not. At times, there are wage boards set up to fix pay packages for different categories of employees working in particular sectors.

In *Killick Nixon Limited vs. Killick & Allied Companies, 1975*, the Supreme Court's 6-judge bench decision regarding the fixation of wages held that the problem needs to be viewed from various important aspects, some of which



Living wage could be revolutionary for various categories of employees in different sectors

are as follows: the condition of the wage scale prevalent in the company; the condition of the wage level prevalent in the industry and the region; the ability and potency to cope with the economic requirements of daily existence consistent with status in society, responsibilities, efficiency at work, and industrial peace; the industry and the region; avoidance of huge distortion of wage differentials taking into reckoning all persons employed in the concern; the compulsive necessity of securing social and distributive justice to the workmen; the capacity of the company to bear the additional burden; the interest of the national economy; repercussions in other industries and society as a whole; the state of the consumer price index at

the time of the decision, etc.

Thus, it is to be seen whether any such modification will have an impact on various aspects of an entity. As a matter of fact, the living wage is a positive and enterprising thought process; it just needs to be carefully implemented. Indeed, it is unfortunate to see daily wagers and contractual workers spending decades on bare minimum wages. As a midway solution, instead of having a uniform living wage, considerations such as the nature of employment (skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled), educational qualifications, state-wise needs, etc., of employees, financial capacity of employers, earnings, nature of business, geographical spread, strength of employees, category, etc., may also be consid-

ered. This would aid in the ease of business and attract better financial investments.

Living wage, as defined by international organizations, is the wage level necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families, taking into account the country's circumstances and calculated for work performed during normal hours. Thus, both the living standard of workers and economic feasibility are to be considered.

It also needs to be noted that any variation in wages will invite changes in the deposition of Provident Fund, gratuity, bonus, ESI, overtime, leave wages, and other such statutory benefits. While making changes, these too will need to be addressed. Further, it needs to be ensured middlemen are

not consuming the wage share of workers and that the same is duly getting deposited in accounts. The government has rightly made rules for the deposition of wages into the accounts of workers and limiting cash transactions in the last few years.

Living wage could be revolutionary for various categories of employees in different sectors. Globally, when countries focus on labour legislations, as India has been doing, it is widely appreciated. Positive and middle-path strategies, apart from ensuring the well-being of many, will be overall very conducive to foreign investments.

The writer is a practising Advocate in Supreme Court and High Court of Delhi. Views expressed are personal.

Living wage, as defined by international organisations, is the wage level necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families

Transforming Indian higher education



T V KATTIMANI

The proposed binary accreditation system is set to revolutionise the assessment, accreditation and ranking of higher education institutions

Indian education system saw a revolutionary change with the arrival of New Education Policy 2020 also known as NEP 2020. While the previous education systems i.e. Sarva Shiksha were based on numbers, the Samagra Shiksha gave more attention to inclusivity and equitability. Along with it highlighted quality over quantity thus extending its support towards universal and holistic education. The concept of "Access, Equity, Quality, and Affordability & Accountability" under this was also applied as a pillar for NEP 2020 for implementation in higher educational institutions (HEIs).

The motto is to enhance the quality of education in HEIs and to compete Indian HEIs with the best institutions in the world. Based on this notion another transformative reform has been done by the Ministry of Education, Government of India through the formation of Dr. Radhakrishnan's committee for revisiting the NAAC accreditation.

Dr. K. Radhakrishnan who is the Former Chairman of ISRO and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the IIT Council proposed a new binary accreditation system for assessing HEIs where the assessment will be more technology-driven. It is a trust-based, transparent, and integrated 'Unified Elicitation Tool' where higher academic institutions will provide their information on the "One Nation One Data" platform. It will reduce the annual visits of the teams in HEIs and validation of the data will be transparent over the digital portal.

A system of high penalties is also proposed for those providing wrong information. Besides, two major features of this accreditation report were Binary Accreditation and Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation. While the Binary Accreditation will segregate the HEIs based on "Accredited" and "Awaiting Accreditation" and "Not accredited", the Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation will customise it in five different levels i.e. Level 1 to Level 5 where the HEIs have to cross each level to go up to Level



4 "Institutions of National Excellence" and Level 5 "Institutions of Global Excellence for Multi-Disciplinary Research and Education". It will also create a roadmap for aligning ranking and accreditation bodies like NAAC, NBA, and NIRF by providing them with a centralised database.

The new accreditation system has suggested various categories of HEIs including Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research - Intensive Institutions, Teaching-Intensive Institutions, Specialised Institutions, Vocational and Skill-Intensive Institutions, Community Engagement & Service related Institutions, Institutions of Rural & Remote location under its "one-size-fits-all model" where the levelling will be done on the orientation of the particular HEI. Further, the aim is to convert the present Score-based, Multiple Grade Accreditation with Binary Accreditation, Portal Self-Disclosure with Public Self-Disclosure, Single Accreditation institutions with Approved Accreditation institutions, One-Size-Fits-All Model with University-Type-Based process, and Input-Process-Limited-Outcome approach with Majorly Outcome-Based approach. All these actions will convert HEIs

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from a Generic policy to a Universal policy.

Since the Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations were put together to improve the calibre and reputation of Indian higher education institutions, they represent a paradigm shift in the accreditation process. The Committee while preparing the report has gone through numerous procedures from putting the suggested draft on the 'MyGov' portal and 'MoE' website for soliciting public opinion/stakeholder engagement. The workshop featured 34 panellists, more than 250 diverse HEIs and 950 participants from HEIs around the nation.

This report discusses establishing criteria and policies for these accrediting organisations, choosing specialists, creating self-assessment report formats, and growing the Accreditation Network to reach the HEIs located in rural areas, remote areas, tribal areas, and other smaller territories. To achieve its goal the report has also done a comparative analysis of the existing accreditation system and the visions of NEP 2020. It has also studied the best global practices of education to understand their model of education and to establish the Indian education system on the same platform.

Based on the suggestions received while formulating the draft, the committee has also classified the accreditation system into three different parameters. They are Pre-Accreditation, Accreditation Process, and Results and Post-Accreditation Incentives. The Pre-Accreditation includes processes like training the institutions, data collection, uploading the self-disclosure guidelines, etc., the Accreditation Process and Results as the name suggests focuses on validation and credit given to the HEI by the peer team. The Post-Accreditation Incentives are important for providing priority status to the institutional body. Care has been taken for step-by-step reforms to ensure the creditability of the system.

Thus, the vision is to implement the new accreditation policy proposed by Dr. Radhakrishnan's committee by December 2024. This new policy is aimed at creating futuristic universities for future generations. It will bring a transformative change in the HEI Approval, Accreditation and Ranking System to make Bharat Vishwaguru.

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor at Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

Not Working Out

New report shows jobs crisis is the No. 1 economic challenge. You wouldn't know it from election rhetoric

India's economic growth in the first three quarters of 2023-24 exceeded 8%, well above most optimistic projections. A Lokniti-CSDS survey of youth in Delhi, however, indicates that headlines miss something. Eighty percent of the respondents said getting a job in the last two years was either difficult or very difficult. Growth's not translating into adequate opportunity for youth.

Narrowing window | Jobs are the No. 1 economic and social issue. Let's start with the big picture. The share of our working age population is about 63%. It's expected to be stable for a while. This is the demographic window in which an economy can transform dramatically. East Asian tiger economies did that. The window was used to create a demographic dividend. Miss this opportunity, a country may stagnate.

Post-Covid scenario | The economy bounced back sharply and unemployment fell. But that's just a part of the story. Two negative trends were visible in the jobs market. People moved back to agriculture, which really means limited earnings. Also, many of the new jobs were in the unstable category of self-employed, especially for women. These challenges have been highlighted again in a jobs report brought out this week by ILO and Institute for Human Development based on GOI data.



No market for young | India's youth employment profile suggests a crisis. Share of youth who are not in employment, education or training has averaged 29.2% between 2010 and 2019. It's the highest in South Asia. There's a high proportion of unemployed educated youth even as industry complains of a shortage of labour for skilled jobs. Leave aside a few elite institutions, education in India is not a proxy for employability. To illustrate, about 3,700 PhDs applied recently for the post of a peon in UP police where Class V was the eligibility criterion.

Women not wanted | That's the job market's message. No surprise then that if 53.2% of the female workforce was self-employed in 2019, the proportion increased to 62% in 2022. Many are not even paid.

Stagnant earnings | Over the past decade the average monthly inflation-adjusted earnings of regular salaried and self-employed persons either declined or remained stable. This is corroborated by weak consumption data in the 8% + GDP numbers.

The jobs crisis should be the priority of all political parties in this election season. But so far we haven't heard of an effective strategy. Time's running out.

BT/12

India's job crisis

Youth bearing the brunt of unemployment

UNEMPLOYMENT is weighing India down, with the country's youth accounting for almost 83 per cent of the unemployed workforce, according to the India Employment Report 2024 published jointly by the International Labour Organisation and the Institute of Human Development. As per the report, the proportion of jobless youth with at least secondary education rose to 65.7 per cent in 2022. The findings have cast a cloud on India's capacity to reap the demographic dividend; young people constituted 27 per cent of the nation's population in 2021.

The report states that the labour force participation rate, the worker population ratio (the number of employed people per thousand citizens) and the unemployment rate witnessed a long-term deterioration between 2000 and 2018, but there was an improvement after 2019. The turnaround coincided with periods of economic distress, both before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, with the exception of two peak Covid quarters. However, the authors of the report have said that this improvement needs to be 'interpreted cautiously' as jobs generated in the slowdown period raise questions about the 'drivers of these changes'.

The world's most populous nation, which is also the fastest-growing major economy, cannot afford to ignore youth employment. The government and the industry need to work in close coordination to rein in joblessness. Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran has put the onus on the industry to hire more people, saying that it is incorrect to think that government intervention can solve every social or economic problem. Nevertheless, policymakers have a key role to play in shaping schemes that can spur skill development and employment generation. No less important than the quantity of employment is its quality. The robust growth in manufacturing, services and construction sectors should guide stakeholders to optimally use the skills of India's educated youth. 6

Digital health education shouldn't lose sight of equity, social justice



SOHAM BHADURI
HEALTH POLICY EXPERT

transformation in the country, was launched in the aftermath of the pandemic and is steadily heading towards achieving a thorough digitalisation of health records. Nearly 58 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHA) have been created so far. And nearly 35 crore health records have been linked with ABHA.

If healthcare is seen as a complex system straddling multiple sub-systems, it is impossible to ignore the system-wide ramifications that digital health is likely to have, ranging from provider payment methods to medical education. Global evidence attests that the effectiveness of digital health rollout is strongly contingent on healthcare personnel, one of its primary stakeholders. In the Indian context, this suggests that reforms in medical education are unavoidable, not just in professional education that produces new healthcare workers but also in continuing education for the existing pool of practising personnel. Maharashtra's recent decision to commence a foundation course in digital health for medical students, the first of its kind in the country, is a notable development. There have been steady calls for its nationwide adoption as well as a stronger, more integrated emphasis on digital health in the medical curriculum. As the discourse gathers steam, one should visit some guiding



THE KEY: The effectiveness of digital health rollout is strongly contingent on healthcare personnel. istock

principles that must be remembered along the way.

The emphasis on digital health in the medical curriculum, consequential as it is, cannot outpace the contemporaneous state of digitalisation of the country's healthcare. These two elements exist in a natural, dynamic equilibrium. It has to reflect the national health realities and priorities of the present day. Digital health cannot be imbibed in its fullest unless integrated at every step of medical training, but overzealous measures in this direction will be wasteful. Rather, its presence in the curriculum must grow steadily as digital health catches on, and given the nature of medical training, this will be inevitable.

There is evidence to back the idea that hard skills in digital health practice may not be as pivotal as many of us may be inclined to think.

dominant emphasis of curricular reforms must be on knowledge and attitudes while also allowing for basic skills. This is particularly important in order to ensure a steady and sustainable expansion and adoption of digital health in the foreseeable future. This shall also prevent an abrupt overburdening of an already crammed medical curriculum, as the emphasis on skills grows hand in hand with the evolution and maturation of the digital health landscape. Maharashtra's incremental approach is laudable and can serve as a paradigm for other states to emulate. A similar approach must be adopted in continuing medical education, with the need to steadily move towards making digital health competencies a part of licensure requirements.

There is evidence lending credence to the idea that hard skills in digital health practice, particularly for doctors, may not be as pivotal as many of us may be inclined to think. Doctors work in inter-professional teams with other crucial cadres of medical and allied personnel, and this is only more likely to accentuate with the evolution of digital health. In such a scenario, teamwork and distributed leadership competencies become all the more crucial. Medical education has traditionally been individualistic in its outlook, and doctors in general rarely

do well outside hierarchical power structures. Another idiosyncrasy of medical education and practice, that of a physician-driven relationship, is likely to undergo a noticeable shift with the mainstreaming of digital health. At bottom, the digital health movement is about empowering the patient, and the concomitant levelling of power relations may not at first be very congenial to physicians. It is here that a stronger emphasis on attitudes, ethics and communication in medical education becomes the key. It is aptly said that unlike some skills, which may depreciate in significance with the advent of digitalisation, leadership and managerial competencies will only tend to become more crucial.

Finally, educational reforms reflecting a systemic expansion of digital health cannot ignore equity and social justice considerations, apart from the ethical considerations arising in personalised practice. Digital health is understood to be an equally effective perpetuator of health inequities unless due caution is exercised right from the design stage. These range from simpler aspects like digital health literacy to subtler ones, such as AI-based tools based on poorly representative datasets exacerbating health inequities. Emphasis on these will be particularly significant for preparing the next generation of health policymakers.

ONE of the most conspicuous ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic transformed healthcare was through an unprecedented mainstreaming of digital health. What was earlier commonly thought to be a substantive adjunct or the 'next big thing' at best has now secured a strong foothold in healthcare delivery in the country. Recognising its potential to improve healthcare access amid stringent mobility restrictions, the government issued the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines in March 2020. This was followed closely by the launch of the eSanjeevaniOPD, proclaimed to be the world's largest national telemedicine service, in April that year. But perhaps the most momentous turn was when it made inroads into national health insurance, which stands to decisively shape the future of public healthcare delivery. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, a Union Government initiative that is spearheading the digital health

ऑनलाइन अतिथि व्याख्यान का हुआ आयोजन

युरेशिया संवाददाता

मेरठ विश्व मौसम दिवस के अवसर पर स्वामी विवेकानंद सुभारती विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा 'जलवायु कार्रवाई के लिए अग्रिम पंक्ति' विषय पर ऑनलाइन अतिथि व्याख्यान का आयोजन किया गया। पत्रकारिता एवं जनसंचार विभाग के संयोजन में आयोजित इस व्याख्यान में भारत मौसम विभाग के पूर्व अतिरिक्त महानिदेशक (एडीजी) एवं साइंटिस्ट प्जीष् डॉ. आनंद शर्मा ने ऑनलाइन जुड़कर विषय से संबंधित गहरी जानकारीयों से विद्यार्थियों और शिक्षकों को रूबरू कराया। उन्होंने कहा कि सतत विकास के लिए मौसम को अनुकूल रखना जरूरी है और इसके लिए आम लोगों को जागरूक किया जाना आवश्यक है। डॉ. शर्मा ने कहा कि जब तक हम स्थानीय स्तर पर नहीं सोचेंगे, तभी वैश्विक स्तर पर बदलाव आएगा। उन्होंने चिंता जताई कि आज मिट्टी, हवा, पानी प्रदूषित हो



गयी है। नदियों का पानी पीने लायक नहीं है। उन्होंने कहा कि इसके लिए जागरूकता जरूरी है और इसमें पत्रकारिता और जनसंचार के छात्र-छात्राएं अहम भूमिका निभा सकते हैं। इसके लिए प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को कार्यकर्ता और सक्रियतावादी बनना होगा ताकि पर्यावरण सुरक्षित रहे। डॉ. आनंद शर्मा ने कहा कि आज मौसम पूर्वानुमान सटीक आ रहे हैं जिससे जनधन की हानि कम हो रही है। आपदाओं में जनहानि कम हो रही है। इसका फायदा सबको मिल रहा है। इस दौरान

विभागाध्यक्ष प्रो. (डॉ.) एस सी थलेडी ने कहा कि आज के समय में मानवीय गतिविधियों के कारण पर्यावरण अत्यधिक प्रदूषित होता जा रहा है जिसके कारण प्राकृतिक रूप से जो ऋतु चक्र है उसमें गड़बड़ी हो रही है। यह स्थिति बहुत ही चिंताजनक है, आज हम सभी को यह समझना होगा कि अगर हम आज इस पहलु पर ध्यान नहीं देंगे तो आने वाली पीढ़ियों को हम एक प्रदूषित वातावरण ही दे पाएंगे। इसके अलावा अपने संबोधन में डॉ. थलेडी ने कहा कि आज पत्रकारिता

एवं जनसंचार के विद्यार्थियों को मौसम पत्रकारिता की ओर ध्यान देना होगा, क्योंकि इस क्षेत्र में भी व्यवसायिक रूप से अत्यधिक संभावना है तथा यह जनोपयोगी भी है। विश्वविद्यालय की पर्यावरण गतिविधियों के तहत आयोजित इस व्याख्यान का उद्देश्य पर्यावरण और जलवायु परिवर्तन के कारणों को जानना था। इस कार्यक्रम के अंत में विभाग में सहायक प्राध्यापक डॉ. प्रीति सिंह ने सभी को धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया। इस कार्यक्रम का संचालन बीजेएमसी की छात्रा गरिमा पांडेय ने किया तो वहीं संयोजन विभाग के सहायक आचार्य राम प्रकाश तिवारी व मधुर शर्मा का रहा। इस अवसर पर प्रो. अशोक त्यागी, शैली शर्मा सहित भारती, भूमी, पलक, आस्था, अर्पित, शकिब, मनीषा, अंजली, अपूर्वा, टीना, अनुष्का, आनंद, सुमन कुमार, नितेश, वंश, गरिमा, सुमैया, हर्षित, दिव्यांशु, मोनू कुमार सहित लगभग 100 लोग देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों से ऑनलाइन जुड़े।