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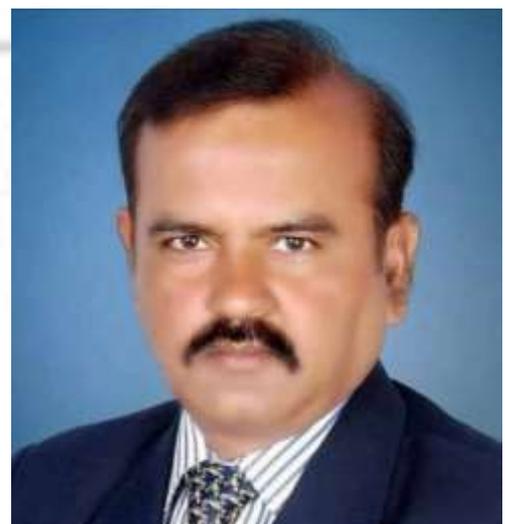


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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

LEGAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT: A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Unemployment is a major challenge in India and affects both the country's economy and legal structure. This article examines a variety of types and causes of unemployment, ranging from structural and cyclical to camouflage and seasonal forms. The study analyses how unemployment leads to economic impacts such as declining GDP, increasing poverty, and growing pressure on governments. One significant concern today is the migration of educated and skilled youth to developed countries, leading to a shortage of capable individuals who could otherwise contribute to India's development.¹ In particular, the article discusses how unemployment affects livelihood rights under Article 21, how crime rates increase due to joblessness, and how it weakens legal enforcement of labour rights.² This article also highlights legal and economic consequences, reviews existing government initiatives like MGNREGA and Skill India Mission, and offers practical solutions such as skill-based education, vocational training, and small business support. The results reflect that unemployment is a deeper issue linked to education, policy failure, technology, and social inequality. Achieving long-term change requires consistent, collaborative efforts from all sectors of society and the state.

Keywords: *Unemployment, Economic Consequences, Legal Implications, Right to Livelihood, Government Initiatives.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The standard definition of unemployment according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) is based on three criteria³ that have to be met simultaneously. The 'unemployed' comprise all persons within the age limits specified for measuring the economically active population, who during the reference period were: (a) 'without work' – were not in paid employment or

¹ Ministry of External Affairs. (2024). Annual Migration Report. Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in>

² Mishra, S. N. (2021). Labour and Industrial Laws. Central Law Publications.

³ International Labour Organization. (2023). World Employment and Social Outlook. Geneva: ILO.

self-employment; (b) 'currently available for work'; and (c) 'seeking work' – had taken specific steps in a recent period to seek employment. According to the National Statistical Commission (India), unemployment is the condition in which a person is capable of working and is actively seeking work but is unable to find any gainful employment.⁴

As per a definition given in the Indian Journal of Labour Economics, unemployment is “a condition of enforced idleness⁵ for individuals who are able and willing to work under prevailing wage levels but cannot find jobs.”

John Maynard Keynes, a famous economist, explained unemployment as a situation where people are willing to work at the current wage rate but cannot find jobs due to low demand in the economy.⁶

Milton Friedman introduced the idea of “natural unemployment,” which includes frictional and structural unemployment⁷ that exist even in a healthy economy.

Arthur Okun described unemployment as “the involuntary idleness of labour resources,”⁸ stressing that when people are ready to work but remain jobless, it leads to a loss of national output.

Generally, people who are willing and able to work but are not able to secure suitable employment are defined as unemployed. It represents the gap in the economy with an insufficient number of jobs related to the people that are both willing and able to work. This issue not only affects individuals but also becomes a vital social and economic problem due to unharnessing of quality human resource. The productive capacity of a nation becomes less due to unemployment, which results in the economy growing at a slower rate and causes waste of potential human resources. It also causes severe problems to society like increased poverty rate, frustration among people, an increasing crime rate in society and declining mental well-being of the unemployed. In developing countries like India, which has a large population of working-age people, unemployment becomes more serious and needs immediate action. It

⁴ National Statistical Office. (2023). Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2022–23. Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.

⁵ Indian Journal of Labour Economics. (2023). “Structural Unemployment and Informal Economy in India.”

⁶ Keynes, J. M. (1936). *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. London: Macmillan.

⁷ Friedman, M. (1968). “The Role of Monetary Policy.” *American Economic Review*, 58(1), 1–17.

⁸ Okun, A. M. (1962). *Potential GNP: Its Measurement and Significance*. Cowles Foundation Paper

prevents people from enjoying an easy and settled life. There is always someone willing to work, but when that does not happen, they end up wasting their time, talent, and education. It also brings problems to that person's family because they may not be able to fulfil their daily requirements. Progress becomes much more difficult for the government if there is a huge part of the population that is not earning and adding no value to society. As per the latest Monthly PLFS data, India's overall unemployment rate remained at 5.6% in June 2025⁹, unchanged from May but up from 5.1% in April 2025. The rise is mainly due to shifts in rural employment and growing urban joblessness. In urban areas, unemployment rose from 6.9% in May to 7.1% in June, while rural unemployment fell from 5.1% to 4.9%. Youth unemployment (ages 15–29) is alarmingly high: 18.8% in urban areas and 13.8% in rural areas in June 2025.¹⁰ Meanwhile, formal sector employment shows positive signs: 1.91 million net EPFO members were added in April 2025¹¹, a 31.3% jump over March, reflecting stronger formal hiring, especially among youth and women.

This means that even though a large number of people are ready to work, they are not getting jobs. In cities the situation is not very good, but slightly better than rural areas, which is still not so good. The rate is changing every month, which shows how the country's job market is unstable. This article intends to investigate the types of unemployment. Then it will also show how unemployment affects a country's economy and the legal measures associated with it. The article will also discuss the role of the government in maintaining unemployment and offer some possible solutions to lower it in the future.

2. TYPES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

There are various types of Unemployment based on manifold economic parameters, some of them are discussed below: -

- **Structural Unemployment:** Unemployment due to lack of skills is called structural unemployment. Example- A person working in a textile mill using old machines loses his job once the factory upgrades to modern machines.¹² In this case, the person is unemployed not because he is unwilling to work but because he lacks work skills.

⁹ Reuters. (2025, July 15). "India's unemployment rate remains steady at 5.6% in June 2025." Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com>

¹⁰ Economic Times. (2025, July). PLFS June 2025 Youth Unemployment Report.

¹¹ Business Standard. (2025, June 22). "EPFO adds 1.9 million net members in April 2025." Retrieved from <https://www.business-standard.com>

¹² Ahuja, R. (2014). Social Problems in India. Rawat Publications

- **Frictional Unemployment:** The short-term unemployment because of people moving between jobs or looking for first job. This generally happens naturally as it is a part of the unemployment process and is not regarded as a real problem. Example- A college graduate has completed their studies as is now looking for their first job. Also, if someone resigns from a job and searching for a better opportunity, he may remain unemployed for short term.
- **Cyclical Unemployment:** It happens due to ups and downs in the economy. When the economy slows down, companies earn less and cut down their costs by reducing their work force. As a result, many people lose their jobs even if they are skilled and experienced. Example- Recently, due to COVID-19 pandemic, businesses shut down¹³ which resulted in mass layoffs in travel, hospitality and other sectors.
- **Seasonal Unemployment:** Seasonal unemployment occurs due to those people who lose their jobs at certain times in the year as demand for their work is not constant throughout the year. This type of unemployment occurs in industries such as agriculture, tourism, construction, etc. Example- Agricultural workers become employed only during sowing or harvesting seasons and during the rest of the year they remain unemployed.
- **Disguised Unemployment:** Disguised unemployment is when more people are working on a job than actually needed. This mostly happens in villages, especially in farming. Example- On a small farm only three people are enough but six are working. The extra three people are not really needed so they are not jobless but their work is not making any real difference. This shows there are not enough jobs and many people are not being used in the right way.

3. CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

- **Growth in Population:** India's rapidly expanding population is one of the main causes¹⁴ of its high unemployment rate. Many young people finish their education and begin looking for work each year. However, the nation's employment rate is not growing at the same pace. Consequently, the number of jobs applicants exceeds the number of vacant positions. Everyone finds it extremely difficult to get work.
- **Lack of Skills and Education:** A person may lack the ability that employers are seeking even after graduating from college. For example, despite having a degree, a person

¹³ National Council of Applied Economic Research. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Employment in India

¹⁴ United Nations. (2023). World Population Prospects 2023. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org>

could not be able to speak English or well versed to use a computer, two skills that are essential for many modern occupations. One of the main reason why so many people have encountered trouble in finding employment is the disconnect between what is taught in classrooms and what is required in the current labour market¹⁵, as many schools, colleges and universities still do not focus on skill development.

- **Reliance on Farming:** In India, a major portion of the population still makes their living from agriculture. However, India's farming industry is seasonal¹⁶ and does not offer year-round employment. Many people are left jobless during the months when there is no harvesting or sowing. Several families work on a same plot of land which results in hidden unemployment. People are locked in agriculture even if it does not offer a good living or full-time employment since there are not many non-farming employment options in rural areas.
- **Slow growth in industry:** One of the primary sources of employment, majorly in cities, is industry. However, the expansion of industries in India has not kept pace with the country's expanding population. There are still not enough factories in many rural areas and small towns. This also affects urban occupations as villagers frequently move to cities in search for jobs. There are also fewer job chances because many industries use automation rather than hire additional workers.
- **Use of Automation and technology:** Nowadays, many businesses use automation equipment's to perform tasks that were previously performed by humans, due to the advancement of modern technology. These machines save money and time, and lessens the need for employees. For instance, robots and machinery can now carry large objects, packing of commodities and even assemble things in factories. As a result, few workers are hired. Technology is crucial for progress but if workers are not prepared to operate new equipment, it can also result in job loss. As a result, there is a wide gap between those seeking employment and the positions that are available.
- **The slowdown in the economy:** Businesses stop growing and many even start reducing expenses when a nation's economy is struggling. Employment is directly impacted by this. To save money, businesses stop recruiting new hires and in fact in some situations, fire current staff members. For example, various companies experienced losses during the COVID 19 pandemic and were compelled to lay off employees. A slower economy

¹⁵ NITI Aayog. (2023). Strategy for New India @75 – Skill Development Chapter. Retrieved from <https://www.niti.gov.in>

¹⁶ World Bank. (2024). India Agricultural Employment Report. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org>

also results in less investment from the public and private sectors which further restricts the creation of new jobs. Many people thus lose their jobs or struggle to find employment during these periods.

4. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment does not only impact people's lives but it also creates major problems for the nation's economy. The country faces decreased production, lower income levels, substandard living and more financial strain on the government when a significant portion of the population is unemployed. It slows down the nation's overall development and starts a vicious cycle that is very difficult to break.

Here are a few of the primary consequences of unemployment on the economy:

- National income loss: When many individuals are still unemployed, they are not adding to the country's output or revenue. As a result, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declines.¹⁷ Simply put, the economy slows down when fewer people are employed because fewer goods and services are created. For any developing country, this loss of potential revenue is a significant setback.
- Decrease in living standards: Unemployment lowers people earning potential hence families become unable to pay for their basic necessities like wholesome food, appropriate clothing, quality education and access to standard healthcare services. This eventually results in poor living conditions especially for the lower and middle classes. Additionally, the gap between poor people and rich people widens, which lowers the nation's general level of living.
- Decrease in demand for goods and services: When people are unemployed, they do not have enough money to spend.¹⁸ So, they only buy the things that they absolutely need and avoid extra spending. This leads to a drop in demand for many products and services in the market. As a result, businesses start earning less and may even reduce their staff, which increases unemployment even more. This creates a cycle where the economy keeps getting weaker.
- Government's financial burden increases: When more people are unemployed, the government has to spend more money on welfare schemes like free food, healthcare,

¹⁷ Ministry of Finance. (2024). Economic Survey 2023–24. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in>

¹⁸ World Bank. (2024). India Economic Update – Domestic Demand Impact. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org>

and other things. At the same time, it collects less money from taxes because fewer people are earning. This creates pressure on the government's budget. It becomes harder for the government to invest in things like education, development, and infrastructure which are important for the country's growth.

- **Wastage of human resources:** When educated and skilled people stay unemployed for a long time, their talent goes to waste. They start losing confidence and their skills may also get outdated. There is a big loss for the country because it spends a lot on educating and training its citizens, but if they do not get jobs, that investment does not give any return. It's like having a machine that's never used that is full of potential, but not helping the economy in any way.
- **Effect on investments and businesses:** High unemployment creates uncertainty in the market. When people are not earning, they do not spend much and this thing affects the profit of businesses. Investors also become unsure about putting money into new projects because they fear low returns. As a result, the overall business environment becomes weak and it slows down economic progress. Without good job opportunities and income flow it is hard to attract new investments into the country.

5. LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is not just an economic problem but it also creates serious legal challenges in a country. When a large section of the population remains jobless, their basic rights get affected, and the legal system faces pressure. Laws related to labour, social security and human rights often fail to reach those who need them most.

Now, we will look how unemployment leads to legal consequences both for individuals and for society.

- **Violation of right to livelihood:** Unemployment directly affects the Right to livelihood, which is a part of the right to life under Article 21¹⁹ of the Indian constitution. When people can't find work, they are unable to earn for their basic needs. The state has a duty to create conditions where citizens can live with dignity, but high unemployment shows that this right is not being properly protected. It raises serious legal and constitutional concerns.
- **Increase in crime rates:** When people stay unemployed for a long time, some of them lose patience and may end up choosing the wrong path. With no regular income, a few

¹⁹Supreme Court of India. (1981). Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory of Delhi. AIR 1981 SC 746.

people get involved in violent crimes²⁰ just to survive or support their family. This puts extra pressure on the police and courts, and the legal system gets overloaded. It also creates fear in society and makes people feel unsafe. In this way, unemployment leads to rise in crime, which becomes a big legal and social issue.

- **Pressure on the legal system:** As unemployment increases, so do legal problems like crimes, disputes over even small amount of money and protests or strikes etc. Courts already have to many pending cases which adds more pressure. Sometimes, people also file cases related to wrongful termination or delays in getting their salary. All these things put extra burden on the justice system which slows down the delivery of justice for everyone not just the unemployed. This way, unemployment affects the speed and efficiency of our legal system.
- **Weak implementation of labour laws:** In many cases, people who are desperate for a job and ready to work for very low wages in unfair condition. Employers take advantage of this and break labour laws²¹ like not giving minimum wages, making them work overtime without pay, and not providing safe working conditions. Since unemployed people don't want to lose any opportunity, they stay silent. This makes labour laws weaker in reality, even though they exist on paper. So, unemployment leads to exploitation and poor enforcement of legal protection.
- **Rise in informal work:** When people don't get proper jobs they start working in the informal sectors like street vending, daily wage labour, small home-based work etc. These jobs generally don't have any legal contract, fixed income, or job security. Since the government can't fully control this sector, many workers remain outside the protection of labour laws. They don't get benefits like health insurance, paid leave, and pension etc. This makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and creates a gap between legal rights and real-life working conditions.

6. RELEVANT LANDMARK JUDGEMENTS

Some important judgments by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India have highlighted how unemployment and lack of livelihood affect the fundamental rights of people. These landmark cases show how the right to employment is directly connected with the right to live a life of

²⁰ National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). (2023). Crime in India Report – Economic Motivated Crimes. Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in>

²¹ PRS Legislative Research. (2023). Analysis of Labour Code Implementation. Retrieved from <https://prsindia.org>

dignity, as given under the Constitution.

- ***Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1986) AIR 180:*** In this case, the Supreme Court said that the right to livelihood is a part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The court explained that if a person is deprived of livelihood, they are also deprived of shelter, food, and dignity. Therefore, protecting employment is very important for ensuring a dignified life.
- ***Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India (1984) AIR 802:*** This case was about bonded labour and the poor working conditions of labourers. The Supreme Court held that denying people decent working opportunities and forcing them into unfair labour practices is a violation of their fundamental rights. The court asked the government to improve employment conditions and protect workers from exploitation.
- ***People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India (2001) 5 SCC 291:*** In this case, the court connected the right to food and the right to work under Article 21, especially for poor people. It supported schemes like MGNREGA that give people employment and help them earn a basic income. The judgment said that giving work to people is necessary to help them survive and live with dignity.
- ***Chameli Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (1996) 2 SCC 549:*** The court explained that the right to shelter, livelihood, and health are all a part of the right to life under Article 21. It said that without a job, a person cannot afford a proper place to live or take care of their family. Therefore, employment is not just economic—it is also a basic right for living with dignity.
- ***State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh (2017) 1 SCC 148:*** This judgment was related to workers who were doing the same job but not getting equal pay. The court strongly supported the principle of “equal pay for equal work”. It said that all workers must be treated fairly, and their employment rights must be protected. Unfair treatment in jobs also creates inequality and frustration among unemployed youth.

7. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

The Indian government has taken several steps to reduce unemployment and create job opportunities. Some of them are mentioned below:

- **MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act):** This scheme provides 100 days of wage employment to rural people every year. It supports unskilled workers during difficult times while also helping in asset creation

in villages. It is one of the largest employment programs globally.²² Similar employment guarantee schemes are also seen in countries like the United States, where unemployed individuals receive temporary financial aid through unemployment insurance until they find a job.

- **Skill India Mission:** This programme aims to teach practical and job-ready skills to the youth. It includes training in computers, tailoring, plumbing, and other areas. The idea is to make individuals capable of getting jobs or starting their own small businesses. This initiative is inspired by successful models like Germany's vocational training system²³, where students get hands-on training while studying, making them ready for work early on.
- **Start-up India:** The government encourages entrepreneurship through this scheme. It offers financial support, easier loan procedures, and tax benefits to help people start their own businesses. This leads to job creation and reduces pressure on the public sector. Countries like Singapore also follow a similar approach²⁴, where their Skills Future programme funds individuals to upgrade skills and start ventures.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** This initiative promotes skill development, especially among school and college dropouts. It offers short-term training, recognition of prior learning, and even placement support. Nations such as Japan follow similar models where the government and industries work together to constantly update skill training based on market demand.
- **Make in India:** This initiative encourages companies, both Indian and foreign, to manufacture in India. It promotes industrial growth and increases employment in sectors like textiles, electronics, and automobiles. Countries with low unemployment like South Korea and China have shown how strong manufacturing policies can help absorb large workforces.

These efforts show that along with launching employment schemes, governments also need to focus on long-term skill development, entrepreneurship, and partnerships with industries. Learning from successful strategies adopted by other countries can help India improve its own employment scenario and reduce joblessness at a larger scale.

²² Ministry of Rural Development. (2023). MGNREGA Annual Report 2022–23. Retrieved from <https://nrega.nic.in>

²³ National Skill Development Corporation. (2023). Skill Gap Report. Retrieved from <https://www.nsdcindia.org>

²⁴ Skills Future Singapore. (2022). Annual Training Report. Retrieved from <https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg>

8. MEASURES TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a serious issue, but it can be improved with some simple efforts like:

- **Skill-based Education:** Students should be given practical training along with regular studies. This will make them ready for real jobs and reduce the gap between education and employment.
- **Support for Small Businesses:** People who want to start their own work should get loans and guidance easily. This will help them earn and also give jobs to others.
- **Vocational Training:** Training for jobs like electrician, beautician, driver etc., should be provided in every area. These jobs are always in demand and can help people earn without waiting for a government job.
- **Promotion of Apprenticeships and Internships:** Like in Germany, where the "dual system" combines²⁵ education with apprenticeship, India should also promote paid internships and work-based learning at school and college levels to provide students with hands-on job experience.
- **Encouraging Remote and Gig Work:** With growing internet access, platforms like freelancing, content creation, and remote customer support can be promoted — just like countries such as the USA have adapted to gig-based economies. This can be a new source of income for many youths in urban and rural areas.
- **Regional Employment Mapping:** Jobs should be created based on local needs and skills. For example, agricultural regions should have support for agro-based industries, and coastal areas can focus on fisheries and tourism. Japan uses this kind of localised employment planning successfully.
- **Strengthening Labour Reforms:** Simplifying and modernising labour laws, as done in countries like Singapore, can attract businesses and industries to set up more units, generating more employment.
- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP):** Government and private companies should work together to create job opportunities. For example, skill development centres run with private industry support can help in providing job-ready training with actual placement opportunities.

²⁵ OECD. (2023). Vocational Education and Apprenticeships – Country Reports. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org>

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

While writing this article, I realised that unemployment is not just a lack of jobs, but a result of many connected issues. There is a clear gap between what students study and what the job market needs. Even educated people struggle to find work because of lack of practical skills. I also observed that even though some government schemes exist, their reach and impact areas are not strong enough, especially in rural and semi-urban regions. Many people are unaware of these schemes or find it difficult to access them due to poor implementation or bureaucratic hurdles. Women and youth face extra challenges due to lack of awareness, safety concerns, social restrictions, and limited local opportunities. In many parts of the country, young women are still not encouraged to take up higher education or work, which increases hidden unemployment. Another important finding is the role of technology. While it creates new job sectors like IT, digital marketing, and automation services, it is also replacing many traditional jobs, especially in manufacturing and basic services. Workers with low or outdated skills are at a higher risk of being left behind.

Moreover, it was found that successful models from countries like Germany, which focuses heavily on vocational education and apprenticeship programs, or Japan, which invests in lifelong skill development and automation-compatible workforce planning, are worth learning from. India can adapt similar ideas to its own context. Lastly, the mindset of job-seeking youth also plays a role. Many young people still focus only on government jobs and avoid private sector or entrepreneurial paths due to fear, social pressure, or lack of confidence. This narrow outlook limits opportunities and adds pressure on limited government vacancies.

10. CONCLUSION

After understanding this topic deeply, it becomes clear that unemployment is not just about the shortage of jobs — it is a bigger problem connected to many areas like education, skill development, awareness, and changing technology. This issue cannot be solved with just one law or quick decision. It needs strong planning, constant efforts, and support from the government, private sector, and people of the country.

We saw that today's education often does not match the skills that jobs actually need. So, we must change how we teach — adding more practical learning, skill-based courses, and job training can prepare students better for the real world. It's not only about getting degrees, but

also about learning how to work in the real job market. Many people still don't know about the government schemes and help that already exist. Especially in rural areas and among women and youth, this lack of awareness is a big barrier. So, there should be more awareness drives, simple procedures, and proper guidance to help people use these schemes fully.

Also, we must understand that not everyone will get a government job. That's why we should promote self-employment and small businesses. When one person starts their own work, they can also give jobs to others, and this slowly reduces unemployment. Technology is also changing the way we work. Some old jobs are disappearing, but new types of jobs are also being created. If we update our skills regularly, we can stay ready for these new opportunities. In the end, fighting unemployment is not just about jobs — it is about giving people dignity, confidence, and a chance to live a better life. If every person gets an opportunity to learn and work, our country will also move forward with more strength and unity.

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