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- ❖ **China-Singapore Relations**
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Third Concept aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Jobless Growth

Present dispensation led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Centre has completed three years in office in May this year. Modi, then the prime ministerial candidate of the BJP, in his election speeches in 2014, would pointedly tell new voters among the youth to give the BJP a chance to improve their lives as they finished their education and entered the labour market. After having been in power for three years, the Modi government has proved to be an utter failure on this metric alone. Under the Modi-led NDA government, there has been a sheer decline in organized sector. Under the UPA-II, during the three years from 2009 to 2011, when India's GDP was still growing at an average 8.5%, the organised sector was opening avenues on average 9.5 lakh for new jobs every year; and even this was seen relatively as 'jobless growth' by the economists. The past two years, 2015 and 2016, have witnessed the average employment generation plummeting to less than 2 lakh jobs a year, which is less than 25% of the annual employment generated before 2011.

In the wake of such a precipitous decline in employment growth in organised sector, many economists have raised the question as to what is going wrong in this sector, where India is expected to enjoy a competitive edge globally. As a sequel to the decline in fresh employment generation to an all time low of 1.5 lakh jobs in 2015, the government expanded the scope of the organized industry from just eight manufacturing sectors to include some key service industries, including education and health to bump up the growth figures. Undoubtedly, this new trick helped the government to show a slight improvement in new job growth from 1.55 lakh in 2015 to 2.31 lakh in 2016; nevertheless, some critics opine that it was still only 25% of the organized sector jobs generated in 2009.

Almost all economists are unanimous about a correlation between the trend in the organised and unorganized sectors. A slowdown of over 70% in the organized sector jobs during the past three years makes it unlikely to perceive a robust growth in unorganized sector jobs, which constitute over 85% of the total labour market, during the same period. Another worrisome question in coming years would be about high employment generating sectors like IT and BPO, which currently employ about four lakh people, because, according to this sector's own estimates, up to 60% of this workforce would be of no use with their present skill level and owing to the impact of automation.

Some economists, while pointing out existing disconnect between GDP and job growth, lament that this huge disconnect is likely to worsen in the coming decade. They further opine that assuming 7-8% annual growth, 2025 will see GDP double, India will add over 80 million net new job seekers; but at current rates only 30 million net new jobs – mostly informal, and low-wage ones – would be created. Recent move by the government of Andhra Pradesh to give a monthly allowance of around Rs 2,000 to every unemployed youth till they find a job, though a part of ruling party's 2014 election manifesto to ensure at least one job for each family in the state, is not seem as a durable solution to tackle employment problem by many experts. The OECD, in its February 2017 *Economic Surveys India report*, has marked four crucial areas which India must immediately address to reverse the dire trend in jobs: Better data to reveal real unemployment figures, skilling up the youth and making them ready for the market, investing more in key sectors such as education and most importantly, fixing the archaic labour laws.

Conceding that India ranks amongst fast-growing global economies; some critics lament that the growth has essentially been jobless. They opine that the tricky problem of unemployment has not been tackled by adequate policy change and display of political resolve. If the current situation is allowed to continue, the possibility of things going out of control cannot be ruled out. The so-called 'demographic dividend', which is currently pulling India down for want of jobs, can become a liability for the present dispensation and may replicate the 2004 scenario of 'Shining India vs. Dark India' in the 2019 general elections.

— BK