

COMMENT

A LABOUR ISSUE!

IN THE WEST THEY ALWAYS TRY to measure the incidence of violence, rather youth violence with the rate of unemployment. No doubt there is a direct link between the steady decline of job potential over the past three decades and the rise of economic inequality and social unrest. But in most third world countries it is the real time bomb threatening the ruling dispensations. Despite the continued 'swan song' about high growth, free market virtues, globalisation, labour market is literally shrinking, throughout the world. And the situation is simply desperate in the South. With old jobs in traditional sector gone and new ones not emerging, it is no longer just a labour issue, it is first of all an issue of basic human rights and right to life.

The number of unemployed youth aged between 15 and 24 years rose by 14.8% between 1995 and 2005, while more than 300 million working youth were living below the US\$2 per day poverty line, according to a new report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The report "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2006", released recently estimates that at least 400 million decent and productive employment opportunities will be needed in order to reach the full productive potential of today's youth.

Youth are more than three times as likely to be unemployed as adults and the relative disadvantage is more pronounced in developing countries, where youth represent a significantly higher proportion of the labour force than in developed economies, says the report.

A disturbing trend is that among young people who do manage to find work, working conditions tend to be below standard. Young workers often find themselves working long hours, on short-term and/or informal contracts, with low pay, little or no social protection, minimal training and no voice at work, according to the report.

The ILO report is the second in a series that examines global employment trends for youth and updates the world and regional youth labour market indicators that were first presented in a report released in 2004.

In 2005, the number of employed young people was 548 million, an increase of 20.1 million from ten years before.

Unemployed youth make up 44% of the world's total unemployed despite the fact that their share of the total working-age population aged 15 and over is only 25%.

There are an estimated 125 million young working poor, meaning that more than 20% of employed youth lived in a household where there was less than \$1 a day available per head in 2005. In the same year, there were approximately 300 million young working

poor at the \$2 a day level - more than one half of all young women and men who worked. As much as 89% of the world's youth were living in developing economies in 2005.

The crisis of unemployment is more than creating a few jobs here and there. It is worsening worldwide. If people begin to grasp the challenges of their times with both hands and take affirmative action, violence will be the logical culmination. ~~///~~