

>

Title: Need to formulate an effective employment scheme for the youth residing in the border areas of the country particularly in Punjab.

SHRI PRATAP SINGH BAJWA (GURDASPUR): Punjab which was once a very progressive and prosperous state suffers from the twin maladies of unemployment and underemployment, prevalent in both the urban as well as in the rural areas. As per reliable data, there are over 9.58 lakh persons unemployed in the State.

In my district of Gurdaspur alone, there are over 1.57 lakh unemployed youth. The situation has further worsened as there is a very high percentage of educated youth who are unemployed. As per a study conducted by the Planning Commission, approximately 61.6 percent of the unemployed in Punjab are matriculates; nearly one-fourth of them are technically or professionally trained.

This is a colossal waste of the nations' human resources, a high potential loss of output and a serious socio economic burden is put on the society. The unemployed youth, who are in deep distress and desperation, are turning to drug and alcohol abuse.

This acute unemployment has also resulted in the desperate search for employment abroad. Several youth grab any and every opportunity to work abroad often falling into the trap of unscrupulous Travel Agents and Placement Consultants who charge exorbitant fees and seldom deliver promised services. There are so many stories of Punjabi youth languishing in foreign jails as a result thereof.

The situation, if not nipped in the bud will lead to a human resource catastrophe. Immediate attention of the Centre is needed to create an effective employment strategy particularly for those residing in the border areas. Such a strategy must address both employment as well as creating entrepreneurial opportunities, in rural and urban Punjab.