

Kerala needs consensus on development issues

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Dr. Thomas Isaac talked about 20 lakh of jobs over a five year period and the same thing was repeated by K.N Balagopal in his first budget. But what we should understand is that the total number of jobs in that sector, which is targeted on what one, can do for one from home is less than 45 lakh in the country today. Alright, are we thinking that 50 per cent of them will come from Kerala, even if this number grows over the next five years? What is the problem that we are not able to get 50 per cent of the jobs in India, we today have about one third. Dr Saji Gopinath , talked about the reason for that is the quality of our higher education which is actually a disaster. When we look at the statistics of companies who give test for recruitment, less than 5 per cent of those who appear in the tests are able to get through the test and from that less than 20 per cent ultimately get a job. This means when you look at 100 students in Kerala, who appear for a test for a job in a software or an IT company, only one will get it. This is something we need to look at because both the UDF government and the subsequent LDF government diluted the Kerala Technical University, to make it an affiliate in your risk which was originally supposed to be a re affiliating university. So the quality of what we give on the technical side is low. I don't think our universities and education institutions should become skilled centers, we need to provide the right kind of inputs, which will enable them to be continuous learners and be able to quickly acquire skills, because continuous learning is going to be very critical in the period as we go forward. What I would suggest is that 20 lakh jobs is possible, but not in the knowledge worker level alone. I would suggest Dr Isaac and K.N Balagopal to look at converting this whole thing into a State initiative on employment generation today. There is no department in government who is responsible for creating new jobs, everyone is only looking at capital expenditure. If we are going through a time when across the world, we actually have a job less economic growth happening. We need to see how can we change the focus from investment to job creation. It is true that we have a very

large number of housewives, where you get an unemployed, but they are not in a position to take on these jobs today. There are companies prepared to give jobs to people who have taken a break in their career to do it, but, unfortunately, is not finding the right skill set.

Let me come to the second point, and this is something which I think is the right opportunity today. It is probably the best time to really create a political consensus on how Kerala's development should happen. I would say that that is the shape, you can be taken by the government, you will have civil society will work with you on and that is something which is to be done.

The third point that I have to see is that the tools for looking at tax evasion on the GST are available, we need to apply those tools and ensure that our compliance on tax is substantially higher than what it is today. None of the numbers which you see today in terms of our tax collection or the kind of overspending etc, justify the level of tax collection that we have. I am not in favor of introducing a digital tax or an additional income tax because the moment you do that people will go for jobs in another State. So they will go elsewhere it works I'm not in favor of that, but I think compliance should increase and we need to look at that I also think that today, because we have gone through a major crisis. It is the best time to start thinking of introducing a participatory social security net, which is sector specific. The tourism sector, you can have a participatory social security net, the IT sector, you can have a participatory social security net, in addition to provident fund and I would request that the government seriously think about working on that the next one. I am happy that there are some points or direction, which is coming up in the area of plantation and they're talking about what more things can we add. I think we should be very open there that has been revolutionary about it. Let us say that you give the farmers, the freedom to cultivate whatever they want, otherwise you're going to say tomorrow Rambutan, then you know suddenly everybody starts cultivating Rambutan the market falls. Then you won't get any price for that. So don't do that, give the farmer, the right to cultivate whatever they want, don't allow real estate development there you can allow food processing, value added on agriculture, nothing more than that. I would also suggest one more thing is to allow them to get us some of the land to be allotted to their workers so that accommodations can be built by the workers for themselves. so I would say, look at the complete reform breaking that upskill , I said earlier,

the higher education sector basic needs to be broken up the land use patterns, need to be broken up.

I talked about the state initiative on employment generation, we talked about their, was just giving an example because coastal sector was talked about. How many fishermen have their children going to sea nowadays they allowed to see the kind of jobs, some of the best divers in the world came from Neendakara, okay why don't we look at finding a model, by which we give them employment here. Can we not have people going in fishing boats with tourists go through a two hour three hour trip catch fish and come back. They will make more money, then they will be gone fishing today, so you need to start thinking innovative. You need to have developed initiative on employment generation. What I would say is that the other thing which I was mentioned earlier, and I think Dr Isaac promise that it will be done is that I would say, with every budgets, you have to see what you promised and what you achieved. There should be a quarterly progress done on the promises that were made the expenses that were talked about and the income that was generated make it a quarterly. The same can be a one page or two pages document pull out the main things and do that and do it on a quarterly basis and I would say that things will be implemented.