

The Indian Society of Labour Economics

The Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) is a professional association of researchers, scholars and other stakeholders interested in the area of labour, employment and development issues. The Society promotes scientific studies of labour markets, employment, employment relations and related issues and disseminates knowledge. It publishes a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal The Indian Journal of Labour Economics (IJLE), which is now in its 69th year of publication. Promoting and featuring scientific studies on labour and employment issues, the journal is co-published with Springer. More information on the journal is available on <http://www.springer.com/economics/journal/41027>



THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF LABOUR ECONOMICS

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6th THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF LABOUR ECONOMICS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

19-21 January 2026 | Symbiosis School of Economics, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune, India

Roundtable on Preparing Indian Workers for The Future Economy

21 January 2026 | Pune



About the Roundtable

Preparing Indian Workers for The Future Economy

Background

India's labour market stands at a critical crossroads. The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital platforms, combined with climate transitions and shifting global value chains, is fundamentally redefining the nature of work. While these disruptions offer avenues for innovation and growth, they pose profound risks to job quality, income security, and skill durability. India currently faces a dual challenge: over 90% of its workforce remains informal and is engaged in agriculture and related activities, while «contractualisation» has enormously expanded, often bypassing traditional employment safeguards and income security. Over 40% of the workers are undereducated and a large percentage unskilled.

The future economy demands a shift beyond basic up-skilling and traditional training toward a resilient ecosystem of lifelong learning and institutional agility. To navigate frequent transitions across sectors, India must rethink the social contract between the state, industry, and labour. Addressing the precarity of contractual and gig arrangements is no longer a peripheral concern but a central economic imperative to prevent widening inequality.

This plenary roundtable will deliberate on the pathways for building a future-ready workforce. The session will explore the urgent policy interventions, industrial strategies, and educational reforms required to equip Indian workers for a volatile economic landscape, ensuring that the future of work in India is both productive and profoundly inclusive.



Some issues for discussions include:

- What are the big gaps between today's Indian workforce and the demands of the future economy?
- Why do skills initiatives continue to underperform despite large investments, and what needs to change immediately?
- How can India prepare workers for automation and AI without deepening informality and inequality?
- What institutional reform—skills, labour regulation, or social protection—matters most for future workforce readiness?
- How can women's participation be increased in future-facing sectors rather than in low-quality, informal work?
- Are current labour market policies helping workers transition across jobs and sectors, or trapping them in vulnerability?
- What must India do differently to ensure the green transition creates jobs rather than job losses?



Programme

WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2026

- Moderator : **Rama Bijapurkar**
Business Advisor and Author
- Panelists : **Ganesh Natarajan**
Chairman, 5F World, GTT Data Solutions, Lighthouse
Communities, EPPS & Honeywell Automation India
Ltd.
- : **Ramakrishna Raman**
Vice Chancellor, Symbiosis International (Deemed)
University
- : **Sudipto Mundle**
Chairman, Centre for Development Studies,
Thiruvananthapuram
- : **Sher Verick**
Adviser to the Deputy Director-General, ILO, Geneva
- : **Ajit Ranade**
Economist; Former Chief Economist, Aditya Birla
Group and Former Vice-Chancellor, Gokhale Institute
of Politics and Economics, Pune



Biographies of the Resource Persons

Rama Bijapurkar

Business Advisor and Author



Business advisor, independent director on boards of blue-chip corporate and academic institutions, researcher, author, columnist and academic, Rama Bijapurkar is a recognized thought leader on business-market strategy and India's consumer economy, as well as a keen commentator on social and cultural change in India. She describes her work as 'bringing the 'people view' to business strategy and public policy'. Rama has been a long-time visiting faculty at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) and is a dominant voice in the media on business and policy issues through her writing. She is the author of influential books on Consumer India and on customer-based business strategy. Her most recent book is "Lilliput Land – How 'Small' is Driving India's Mega Consumption Story"

Ganesh Natarajan

Chairman, 5F World, GTT Data Solutions, Lighthouse Communities, EPPS & Honeywell Automation India Ltd.



Dr. Ganesh Natarajan is Executive Chairman and Co-Founder of 5F World, GTT Data Solutions Ltd. and Lighthouse Communities Foundation. He is also Chairman of Honeywell Automation India and EPPS and an independent Board member of Hinduja Global Solutions, SBI Payments, SBI DFHI, 1Crowd and Foundation to Educate Girls Globally. He is also a GP/ Global Partner in Cornerstone Ventures and Arise Ventures and an active investor through 5F World and the Indian Angel Network. Dr. Ganesh Natarajan has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from BIT Mesra, Ranchi, a master's



in industrial engineering from IIM Mumbai, PhD from IIT Bombay and Advanced Management from Harvard Business School. He has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award of BIT Mesra, IIT Bombay and IIM Mumbai. Harvard Business School has written and teaches two case studies on Dr. Ganesh Natarajan and his success through Vision Communities and Innovation. Dr. Ganesh Natarajan has a track record of success in intrapreneurship / entrepreneurship, scaling APTECH from 4 to 400 crores, Zensar from 300 to 3000 crores and GTT from start-up to two rounds of funding to private equity to a listing on the BSE main bourse in eleven years. EY recognised Dr. Ganesh Natarajan for exceptional entrepreneurship in 2004. Dr. Ganesh Natarajan has been Chairman of Industry association NASSCOM and NASSCOM Foundation and various National Committees of the Confederation of Indian Industry and the All-India Management Association. He has also been President of the HBS Club of India and a Charter member of The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) and a Co-Chair for the Sustainability & Social Special Interest Group of TiE Global. Dr. Ganesh Natarajan is the author of fourteen books and a regular writer and speaker at national and international forums. His primary interests are in Digital Success, Dual Intelligence of Humans & AI and Leadership in the corporate and social sector.

Ramakrishna Raman

Vice Chancellor, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University



Dr. Ramakrishnan Raman, an accomplished academician and seasoned professional, is the Vice Chancellor at Symbiosis International (Deemed University). With a remarkable educational journey that includes a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Engineering and an MBA in Systems and Marketing, and a doctoral degree in Management from Pune University, Dr. Raman brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to this esteemed institution. His extensive career spanning over two decades is a testament to his diverse experience in the corporate, academic, and research domains. He has served Symbiosis for over a decade in different capacities including Professor & Director Symbiosis Centre for Information Technology, Professor & Director Symbiosis Institute of Business Management – Pune, Dean – Faculty of Management and Director – Strategy & Development. Dr. Raman's contributions extend beyond the classroom, as he has been instrumental in fostering international collaborations with universities in Japan, Canada, United Kingdom,



and the United States. His prolific research in Information Systems, IT Strategy, Entrepreneurship, AI, Big Data, has earned him recognition with international academia. He has published several papers in reputed International Journals indexed in SCOPUS and Web of Science.

Sudipto Mundle

Chairman, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram



Sudipto Mundle is Chairman of the Board of Centre for Development Studies, India, and serves on the boards of several other organisations. Formerly he was an Emeritus Professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) and distinguished Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research. He was also a member of the Fourteenth Finance Commission, India, the erstwhile Monetary Policy Advisory Committee of the Reserve Bank of India and the National Statistical Commission, where he also acted as Chairman. He is the current President and a life member of the Indian Econometric Society.

He spent much of his career until 2008 at the Asian Development Bank, Manila, where he held several positions including that of a Director in the Strategy and Policy Department as his final assignment. In his earlier career in India, he served in a number of academic institutions including the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, and NIPFP, New Delhi, where he was the Reserve Bank Chair Professor. He was an economic adviser in India's Ministry of Finance from 1986 to 1989.

Dr. Mundle graduated from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, in 1969 and has a Ph.D. in economics from the Delhi School of Economics. He was a Fulbright Scholar at Yale University, USA; a Joan Robinson Memorial Fellow at King's College, Cambridge University, UK and has also had visiting assignments at the Institute of Social Studies at the Hague and the Japan Foundation, Tokyo. His current research interests include development economics, fiscal and monetary policy, macroeconomic modelling, forecasting and governance. He has published several books and papers in professional journals. He is also a regular columnist for the financial newspaper Mint.



Sher Singh Verick is Head of the Employment Strategies Unit in the Employment Policy Department of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. Prior to this position, he was Manager of the Employment Policy and Analysis Programme of the International Training Centre of the ILO and Deputy Director of the ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India. He has also worked for the UN and various research institutions in Europe and Australia. He holds a master's degree in development economics from the Australian National University and a doctorate in economics from the University of Bonn. Since December 2004, he is a Research Fellow of the Institute for Labor Economics (IZA). He has published in a range of journals and has authored or edited a number of volumes, including the Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda (2016).

Ajit Ranade

Economist; Former Chief Economist, Aditya Birla Group and Former Vice-Chancellor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune



Ajit Ranade's thirty-five year career has spanned both academic and corporate assignments. He served as the Vice Chancellor of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune till October 2022. Prior to that he was Group Executive President and Chief Economist with the Aditya Birla Group, an Indian multinational conglomerate. Ranade has been a member of the executive committees of apex industry chambers CII, FICCI and MCCIA. Ranade has earlier taught at universities in the U.S.A. and in India. He has been a member of the board of several companies and trusts, and a columnist for over two decades, writing on economics and current topics. He is a co-author of an award-winning book "Rising to the China Challenge" (2021). Ranade is co-founder and trustee of Association for Democratic Reforms. He is a Trustee of the Pune International Centre and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Takshashila Institution. Ranade was educated at Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Brown University. He received the Distinguished Alumnus award from IIT Bombay in 2009.

