

Youth to act as pillar for sustainable value creation: Dr R Seetharaman

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THE active engagement of youth in development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, Doha Bank Group CEO Dr R Seetharaman has said.

Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population, he said while addressing an online conference organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Tamil Nadu State Council, with the support of SRM Institute of Science and Technology in Chennai.

"Young people are the innovators, creators, builders and leaders of the future. But they can transform the future only if they have skills, health, decision-making, and real choices in life," Dr Seetharaman said.

"Today's record 1.2 billion young people present an enormous opportunity to transform the future. The potential economic gains would be realized through a demographic dividend, which can occur when a country's working age population is larger than the population that is dependent."

In order to maximize the dividend, he continued, countries must ensure their young working-age populations are equipped to seize opportunities for jobs and other income-



Doha Bank Group CEO Dr R Seetharaman

earning possibilities, the UN agency said.

In an independent study in 2012, the International Labour Organization revealed the following demographics — India

has the largest population of youth in the entire world with 66 per cent of the total population in the country is below the age of 35, he pointed out.

Nearly 40 per cent of the

Indian population is aged 13 to 35 years. The median age in India in 2010 was just 25.2 years, compared to 34.5 years in China. With 356 million people between the age of 10-24 years, India has the world's largest youth population despite having a smaller population than China, he said.

"Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults. The youth today feels an urge to speak up, to stand by its self and its beliefs and ideals," the Doha Bank CEO said.

"The youth today believe

in the freedom of speech and expression. They are making the world know that they are against injustice, inhumanity, social problems, racism, inequality, differentiation in religions, political issues, and many other things.

"The youth keep in mind that they are the future; this country and world will be passed onto them. But they don't want it in this present sick state; they want to work from now to make the world a better place tomorrow.

"They are aggressive yet just, strong but cater to the needs and wants of others, youth of today but leaders of tomorrow. Young people in India are growing up in a time of rapid societal change, yet the social support systems

needed to help them thrive in the future are not keeping pace and adapting to these changes."

Indian youth are educated in a system largely focused on exams and rote learning, a system that doesn't develop the creative capacities and social and emotional skills needed to thrive in the 21st century, Dr Seetharaman said.

"Furthermore, little, if any, attention is paid to preparing teachers, youth workers, counselors, teaching artists or youth organizations to provide youth with support in making positive life choices, expressing themselves, committing to their own learning, and becoming leaders in their families and communities," he added.