

Business Standard

PM woos labourers, announces two labour welfare moves

RSS-affiliated BMS flays govt for labour reforms

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday sought to prepare labourers for changes in labour laws, even as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) staunchly criticised the labour reform moves of the Centre as well as the Rajasthan government.

At the Indian Labour Conference, a tripartite platform of trade unions, industry and the government, Modi launched an improved version of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme and the national career service portal.

At the same time, Modi implicitly wooed labourers for changes, saying, "Today, there is an opportunity before India to make it big. We can't be sure that this will knock our door again."

He asked the trade unions to not only look at the interests of the workers employed currently, but also scores of unemployed youth who have been entering the labour market regularly.

The prime minister said his ways to generate employment might be different from others, but the aim is the same.

However, he referred to only amendments to the Apprenticeship Act and did not directly name any of the other contentious labour reforms such as proposed industrial relations code.

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Lauding the amendments, he said there are 200 million apprentices in China, 100 million in Japan, three million in Germany, but India has only 300,000 as industrialists were not hiring apprentices due to cumbersome labour laws.

However, the very same amendments drew staunch opposition from BMS leader B N Rai. He also took on the Centre for allowing Rajasthan to move forward with labour reforms, because of which other states are also now eager to follow suit.

He alleged that foreign investors are attaching conditions for their investments. He asked the government to disclose "these conditions" attached to foreign direct investment.

Rai also asked the government to give one of the public sector units to workers to manage on an experimental basis.

The prime minister said there was a thin line between labour welfare and welfare of labour unions, boosting industries and boosting industrialists, promoting national interests and those of the government.

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He criticised social behaviour of many of the countrymen of looking down the poor labourers and underscored the need of dignity of labour. He asked industrialists to imbibe the spirit of entrepreneurship among labourers as well and promote innovation among them even if they don't have required certificate.

The prime minister mooted an idea of asking the middle class to contribute to funds of domestic workers employed by them so that they can use social welfare schemes by the government.

The improved version of ESIC involves hygienic practices. Now, colour of bedsheets would change every day on the basis of VIBGYOR so that patients know that these are washed and changed each day.