

# Union Labour and Employment Ministry Will Take All Possible Steps to Help Mitigate Problems Faced by The Industry and the Workers Due to Lockdown Announced to Curb Covid-19 Pandemic

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**After Meeting with labour unions Shri Gangwar today holds webinar with employers' organizations.**

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has been in dialogue with the social partners to discuss the emergent situation arising out of COVID-19 pandemic and to chalk out strategies and policy initiatives to minimize its impact on the workers and on the economy. The Ministry has already held Webinars with the representatives of the Central Trade Unions and the Employers' Associations on 1st May 2020 on the occasion of the International Labour Day. Another Webinar was held separately with the representatives of CTUs on 6th May 2020. In further continuation of the process, Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of State (I/C) for Labour and Employment held a Webinar with the Employers' Organizations today participating from his office in New Delhi. The issues deliberated during the Webinar include (i) Protection of the interest of Workers and Migrant Workers in view of COVID-19, (ii) Measures to generate Employment, (iii) Measures to be adopted for restarting economic activities and (iv) Measures to improve situation of MSME to enable them to discharge their liabilities under Labour Laws. Senior officers of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Representatives of the Employers' Organizations participated in the Webinar.

The Minister in address informed about various measures taken by the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment to mitigate the problems of workers during COVID-19 like relaxation in the provisions of ESIC and EPF, setting up of control centres/helplines across the country, etc. He mentioned that his Ministry is sympathetic to the requirements of the industry and would try to provide all possible help, for revival of industry and reopening of the economy. He also mentioned that the Ministry of Labour and Employment is consulting other concerned line Ministries for resolving the issues being faced by the Industry, particularly, MSME sector. He requested the representatives of the Employers' Organizations to suggest measures that could be taken to deal with the present situation so that the interests of all stakeholders are taken care of.

The following suggestions were given by the representatives of the Employers Organizations:

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- (i) Relaxation of the provisions of Industrial Disputes Act to treat the lockdown period as lay-off;
- (ii) Keeping in view the difficulties being faced by the industry and liquidity crisis, the wages paid by to the workers may be covered under expenses under CSR funds;
- (iii) To increase the maximum limit of 33% workforce to atleast 50% of the workforce after the reopening of the industry to allow increase of goods and services to optimum level;
- (iv) to waive the PMGKY's condition of covering only those enterprises whose 90% or more employees were drawing monthly wages less than Rs 15,000 under the Scheme so that more workers can be covered under the scheme;
- (v) To suspend the labour laws for the next 2-3 years except the provisions like minimum wages, bonus and statutory dues, to help industry to come out of the present crisis;
- (vi) To increase the working hours to 12 hours per day.
- (vii) To provide an appropriate package to the industries so that the business is sustainable and there is no loss of job opportunities.
- (viii) Power supply to the industry may be provided at subsidized rates.
- (ix) The status of Migrant Labour is a matter of serious concern. A programme may be formulated for return of this migrant labour to work by providing counseling to alleviate their fears on Covid-19, providing financial help for their transportation, providing free groceries for about six months, etc.
- (x) To create a databank of Migrant Labour. To create a national epidemic fund to help the workers of unorganized sector and daily wagers.
- (xi) Reduce social security costs on both employees and employers.
- (xii) Instead of different zones like red, orange and green, there should only be zones viz. Containment zone and non-containment zones to facilitate easy movement of workers and goods.

Allow all activities in the non-containment zones. Concluding the discussions, the Labour Secretary welcomed the suggestions given by the representatives of the Employers' Organizations. He stated that the focus should now be on reviving the industry and opening of economy, to fully revive the economic activities and employment opportunities. He assured that Ministry of Labour and Employment is committed to provide all the help in case of any problems faced by the industry and also to protect the interests of the workers.