

Govt seeks to mend fences with unions to roll out labour codes

Updated: 23 Aug 2021

NEW DELHI: The government is looking to resume formal negotiations with trade unions to ensure the smooth roll-out of four labour codes and other related policy steps.

A senior labour ministry official said Union labour minister Bhupendra Yadav held a “courtesy” meeting with a dozen central trade unions recently. Yadav, who took charge in July, has told the unions that they can hold further meetings with him every Friday, either individually or collectively, the official said.

The labour ministry is also open to reviving the Indian Labour Conference (ILC), the annual apex tripartite meet comprising government, employer representatives and employee representatives on all key labour policies that have been in suspension for six years.

“The ministry wishes to take trade unions along, and the new minister has already met them once. Yes, there are differences, but issues can be sorted out. Some unions have raised the issue of reviving ILC,” the official said, seeking anonymity.

India has consolidated 29 central labour laws into four labour codes on wages, industrial relations, occupational safety and social security. Though Parliament has passed the laws, it is yet to be rolled out due to a lack of preparation by the states and reservation among industries to some of the provisions. Trade unions have been demanding that the codes need to be reworked as they are tilted in favour of industries.

Confirming the meeting with Yadav, Amarjeet Kaur, general secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), termed it as a courtesy call. “Yes, there was a meeting, but it was just an initial meet for around 45 minutes to one hour to know each other. No policy decision was discussed, no labour code issues were discussed—neither was there any update on the reframing of rules that unions have been demanding,” Kaur said, adding that reconvening of ILC will be a key factor to gain confidence in the stretched relationship between the government and the unions.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), India’s largest trade union and an affiliate of the RSS, too, has written to the government that ILC meet has not happened for the past six years although millions have been rendered jobless in recent years and many more have faced a reduction of incomes in both formal and informal sectors.

In its letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 20 July, BMS said ILC was held last in 2015. “Today, several burning issues such as that of migrant workers, labour law reforms, informal sector workers are matters of high concern for workers,” BMS said in its letter. A second labour ministry official said the suggestions of unions are being evaluated and added the new labour codes are not in violation of rules of the International Labour Organization.

Meanwhile, Gautam Mody, general secretary of the New Trade Union Initiative, said what the labour ministry is conveying is more “posturing than action”. “They wish to give the feeling that they are reaching out. But the seriousness is missing,” he said.

Disclaimer: The content above is taken from the source mentioned

Resource: Live Mint, 23 August 2021

Copyright © 2019 Aparajitha Corporate Services Pvt., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.