

Mandaviya Says Most States Have Amended Local Labour Laws in Line with Central Codes Amid Growing Union Opposition.

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Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya stated that a majority of Indian states have already amended their local labour laws to align with the four central labour codes passed by Parliament between 2019 and 2020, even though the Centre has yet to implement them. Speaking ahead of a nationwide strike called by major trade unions, Mandaviya revealed that 31 states have incorporated key reforms—many of them controversial—outlined in the pending codes. These reforms, aimed at boosting industrial ease of doing business and streamlining labour practices, include extending work hours, easing retrenchment regulations, and allowing night shifts for women.

Despite the central government's delay in notifying the rules necessary for implementation, several states—both NDA-ruled and Opposition-led—have independently moved forward with labour reforms. States like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana have raised the threshold for requiring government approval for layoffs and plant closures, now aligning with the codes' limit of 300 workers. These states have also introduced provisions for compounding offences, allowing employers to settle certain violations through fines instead of prosecution. However, states like Kerala and West Bengal have resisted these changes.

Mandaviya noted that the government is open to discussions with labour unions but described much of the resistance as politically motivated. Labour organisations, however, remain adamantly opposed to the reforms, particularly provisions they view as anti-worker. A coalition of ten national trade unions has called for a general strike on July 9, 2025, with expected participation from over 250 million workers, including those in banking, insurance, mining, and the rural sector. Their key demand is the rollback of the more contentious aspects of the labour codes.

The four central labour codes—namely, the Code on Wages (2019), the Industrial Relations Code (2020), the Code on Social Security (2020), and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020)—were introduced to consolidate 29 existing labour laws and overhaul India's labour market framework. While the Centre maintains that the reforms are designed to improve job creation and investment climate, critics argue that the changes reduce worker protections, dilute collective bargaining rights, and increase employer discretion in hiring and firing practices. Until both the Centre and the states notify their respective rules, the codes remain unenforced—despite growing friction between government priorities and labour rights advocates.