

Four labour codes may get implemented ahead of schedule

Updated: 13 Jan 2021, 05:46 AM IST

- **Rules for wage and industrial relations codes will be ready by the end of January, said the labour ministry.**

The Union government Tuesday indicated that it is accelerating labour reforms and looking for an early implementation of the four labour codes, and the rules to this effect will be ready by the end of January. This comes despite allegations that the Centre is ignoring trade unions.

In October, the Union labour ministry had said that it aims to implement the four labour codes by April. However, on Tuesday, labour secretary Apurva Chandra said his ministry will be ready with the rules of all four codes by 31 January. "Implementation of the rules can happen any time after that date ...it may happen earlier than April also," Chandra said.

The four labour codes are being seen as a big reform aimed at reducing bureaucratic hurdles, improving ease of doing business, simplifying labour laws, streamlining the definition of labour market components, and expanding social security coverage.

The government, which held a tripartite meeting (involving its officials, and employees' and employers' representatives) on Tuesday, said all the trade unions that skipped the meet will be invited again next week before the rules are finalized.

"Rules are ready for wage and industrial relations codes. A committee has been formed for formulating minimum floor wages after due deliberations. The tripartite consultations are almost over and one last round may happen soon for occupational safety and social security codes," Chandra said.

On Tuesday, the labour ministry met employers' representatives, industry chambers, and some trade unions. "We listened to them. The suggestions were heard and recorded and during finalization of rules several of them are likely to be used," said D.P.S. Negi, senior labour and employment advisor at the ministry.

The employer organizations, authorities said, have sought to expand the scope of gig workers and include those who are not working with any aggregator and are seeking clarity on the salary component on which Employees' Provident Fund will be calculated.

However, authorities did not comment on what will be the minimum wage, by when the committee will submit its report, and how the wage code can be implemented without effecting a mandatory wage floor.

At least 29 central labour laws have been merged into four broad codes on industrial relations, occupational safety and health, wages, and social security. The ministry said it is appointing legal consultants to study state labour legislations and ensure that all are on the same page with regard to "the new central legislations".

With regard to the 10 central trade unions not attending Tuesday's meeting, Negi said the "ministry wants everyone on board. We invited them for Tuesday's meeting and shall invite them for the one

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next week. That will be the last one on tripartite consultations. If they wish not to come, no one can do much."

"Instead of taking our objections seriously, the government is trying to create a farce of tripartite consultations by setting up this kind of video-conference when we know that physical meetings of the government are taking place at various levels, including negotiations with farmers and the election preparation rallies in various states," the 10 trade unions had said in a joint statement Monday after deciding to skip the meeting.