

AIR Spotlight: National Labour Conference and its Significance

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. This article features a discussion on the National Labour Conference.

Participants:

1. Shankar Aggarwal, Former Labour Secretary
2. Shishir Sinha, Journalist

Context

This episode of Spotlight features a discussion on the recently held National Labour Conference.

National Labour Conference

- The Ministry of Labour & Employment organised a two-day National Labour Conference of Labour Ministers and Labour Secretaries of States/Union Territories at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh in August 2022.
- The Prime Minister virtually addressed the inaugural session of the conference.
- The conference was held in line with the Prime Minister's vision for the next 25 years in preparation for India @100.
- **Aim:** To promote the welfare of workers along with a vision to improve their ease of living, and enhance their skill sets which would enable them to play a crucial role in Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

Focus Areas of the National Labour Conference

The key focus areas of the Ministry of Labour and Employment for the conference include:

- Gender equality and better job opportunities for women
- Improving labour force participation rate at par with developed countries
- Decent work for all, including migrant workers
- Transition from informal to formal economy
- Extending social security benefits for [gig and platform workers](#)
- Addressing the skill gap and facilitating planned migration and mobility
- Extending universal and comprehensive social security and pension to all

Significance of National Labour Conference

- The Conference has played an important role in addressing the differences between the union and states with respect to various issues related to labour.
- There have been accusations about the misappropriation and misutilization of the Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Fund which is controlled by the state governments.
 - The issues associated with such misutilization were discussed at the conference along with issues with the collection of data on such workers.
 - It was decided to integrate all the portals of the Centre and the states to facilitate smoother sharing of information among them.
- There were discussions about integrating the [e-Shram portal](#) with the social security schemes initiated both by the Union as well as the State Governments to extend social protection to workers and to improve employment opportunities for all.
 - Over 28 crore unorganised workers have already been registered on the e-Shram portal and the data from the e-Shram portal will be shared with States to help States in making policy-driven decisions and implementation of welfare schemes.
- The conference also involved detailed discussions about “**Swasthya se Samridhi**” for improving medical care and services through Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) hospitals run by State Governments and its integration with [PMJAY](#).
 - ESIC has been a remarkable example of cooperative federalism where the states and the centre collaborated for providing healthcare services to the labourers.
- “**Vision Shramev Jayate @ 2047**” was one of the core themes of the conference that drew much-needed attention to issues such as social protection for gig & platform workers, gender equality at work and better opportunities for women.
- The National Labour Conference also featured a range of discussions on the issues associated with the rollout of the new labour codes.
- Further, various interventions required to ensure ease of doing business and ease of living for workers, decriminalisation of offenses under [Labour Codes](#), one-time license, compliance and returns were discussed.
- With respect to the participation of women in the workforce, aspects such as the need to leverage flexible workplaces, assigning value to unpaid care work and improving workplace safety were highlighted.
- The need for the creation of millions of jobs through sustainable and clean technology adoption was reiterated as the transition to clean energy practices can lead to the loss of several traditional jobs on account of the shutdown of carbon-intensive industries.

Way forward

- Every worker in the country irrespective of the nature of the work i.e. formal or informal sector must be guaranteed social security to protect their dignity.

- Education, especially education for women, and skill development which are key to the welfare of labourers should be included in all discussions about labour.
- The development of infrastructural facilities also promotes increased labour participation among women and the labour workforce from rural and far-flung areas.
- New mechanisms must be created to ensure that all the workers in the country are guaranteed adequate income.
- Efforts must be taken to protect the rights of gig and platform workers by ensuring that they are earning a stable income, ensuring job and social security, and are protected from being harassed by huge corporate firms.

