

THE ILO TAKES NOTE

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ILO urges PM Modi to remind state governments of India's international commitments on labour rights

Geneva-based International Labour Organization (ILO) has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to remind state governments of India's international commitments on labour rights. The appeal came after various labour unions sought the ILO's intervention in the suspension or amendment of labour laws by some states.

Those actions, critics argue, expose workers to exploitation at a time of crisis. Supporters say that Indian labour laws were much too restrictive for business, and they only kept formal employment low. Easier terms for investors, the latter believe, could attract global companies looking to shift production out of China. These moves await the President's approval, though. The Centre's stance has been a study in caution; it has not yet signalled a go-ahead. Reports suggest that the proposed changes could fall afoul of ILO's Convention 144, which calls for consultations among government, workers and employers. If the country is judged to be in violation of it, an ILO rebuke may put some foreign investors off. They prefer business regulations to be minimal, but signs of policy instability caused by a public controversy could deter them, too.

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