



Laboured LAWS: Fix India's rigid labour laws first, deterrent punishment for violations can follow

The draft labour code on social security 2018 talks of community service for individuals in a company's top management for violations of mandatory social security provisions. If a violation attracts a fine and a jail sentence of up to two years, the choice of undertaking a fixed number of hours of community service will be extended to the top executives in lieu of the jail-term. Violations that will attract a community service order include failure to pay social security contribution of workers, maintain records and furnish information to inspectors, pay gratuity, provide creche facility and retrenching women workers during maternity leave. Over 48,000 firms in the country had been listed by the Employees' Provident fund Organisation for failing to deposit provident fund contributions for March 2018—EPFO contributions are mandatory for firms hiring at least 20 workers while those that have at least 10 must provide employees medical cover under the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). The idea is to have a form of punishment that could serve as a deterrent while not meaning imprisonment. Many developed nations use it to punish lesser offences.

Punjab CM urges industry to contribute part of CSR fund for social security

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has exhorted the industry to partner with the state government in implementing its social welfare agenda by contributing a part of their CSR budget to the recently launched Social Security Fund. He was interacting informally with some of the states leading industrialists on Saturday evening, to elicit their views and feedback before finalising the operational guidelines of the new industrial policy. The chief minister mooted the idea of the industry joining hands with the state government to build the social security network for the underprivileged sections of the state, particularly Dalits. The industry stalwarts were quite receptive to the suggestion, which would pave the way for the state government to reinvest the savings thus secured for the exchequer into infrastructural development for promoting industry, an official spokesperson said today while giving details of the meeting.

Artificial Intelligence facing large skills shortage, says Microsoft

The fast-emerging field of Artificial Intelligence, which has suddenly caught the attention of the IT industry and the governments across the world, is facing a large skills shortage, a top Microsoft official has said. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also facing the challenge of appropriate use of data, group programme manager of Microsoft Learning Matt Winkler told PTI. "There is a pretty large skills shortage. Lots of folks are talking about it (AI). A lot of folks are very, very excited about it and then they want to go and make that real. And when they go to make that real, there's a really large skills shortage," Winkler said. That's why it's so exciting to be trying to bring these technologies to more developers because it's

going to bring more people into the mix, he said. Winkler said the second challenge is really around data.

IBM India says cyber security a gold mine for jobs

Global technology major IBM has said there is a massive shortage of cyber security professionals in the country, urging young graduates to look this segment, which is a high-margin segment for companies, as a lucrative career option. The company, which looks at India both as a market as well as a talent pool to serve the global markets on cyber security, said a whopping 3 million cyber security professionals are required in the country but the supply is not even 1 lakh now, Kartik Shahahni, integrated security leader for IBM India and South Asia, told PTI here. "Can I find people, yes I can. But can I find enough number of people? There is obviously an opportunity for more number of people than we actually have now," Ananda K Vaideeswaran, director and global integrated leader, chipped in saying.

What India can learn from Mexico's experience

Benito Juárez International Airport in Mexico City is an airport that shows signs of wear and tear. It serves as the gateway to most who fly into Mexico. In 2017, about 44 million passengers used the terminal, making it the busiest in Latin America (it would rank about 15th on Asia's list, behind Mumbai and Delhi). A second airport, about 10 miles further from the city, was commissioned by incumbent President Enrique Peña Nieto (EPN). It is slated for completion in 2022 and will join a slate of other infrastructure projects—in roads, rail, ports and logistics—initiated during EPN's six-year term that ends this year (he is not permitted another term under Mexico's constitution). Under EPN, Mexico has been a front-runner in reforms, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Reform action was led by the Pacto por Mexico, a historic agreement between the three main parties to restore high growth after years of tepid growth. The scope and speed of reform have been remarkable and have in particular targeted Mexico's oligopolistic sectors—telecommunications, electricity and oil. All three have been substantially deregulated and the regulatory framework for private sector participation has been established. The Pacto por Mexico has been complemented by reforms aimed at improving the quality of education and healthcare, enhancing the effectiveness of the judiciary, boosting female participation in the workforce and reducing informality.

Safe daycare, reliable public transport will increase women's socio-economic involvement, says IDRC chief Jean Lebel

Women in urban India turn down better employment opportunities further away from home in favour of lower-paid local opportunities as the public transport system is often unreliable or unaffordable. Safe, comfortable, convenient and affordable transport can play an important role in women's strategic empowerment by facilitating access to social and economic opportunities, *IndiaSpend* reported on 9 April, 2018. About 51 percent of Indian women aged 15-49 were anaemic, most in the world, according to the Global Nutrition Report 2017, which severely affects the productivity and health of women. Increasing the involvement of women in economic activities is one of the biggest challenges the country is facing among others, highlights an on-going *IndiaSpend* series.

Call for NE Journalists to Unite

The Northeast India Federation of Journalists (NIFJ) on Saturday called upon the scribes of the region to unite in order to overcome the challenges faced by the media fraternity of the region. Journalists in the region are facing threats from extremist groups, forest and drug mafia, intolerant politicians, bureaucrats and business community organisations, the NIFJ said in a statement. "Journalists of this region are not getting a decent salary and perks. The newspaper managements have not implemented mandatory Wageboard Awards. The plight of the journalists of electronic media is worse. They are not covered under the Working Journalists Act," it said. The NIFJ urged the management of media houses to abide by the mandatory provisions of the labour laws such as issuance of appointment letters, provident fund, gratuity, leaves and due promotion to the scribes.

