

RSS-affiliated trade union to stage protest on Feb 24

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Jaipur: In September last year, as central trade unions across the political spectrum went on strike demanding that the government implement 12 points - including hike in minimum wages to Rs 15,000 per month, a minimum pension for workers of Rs 3,000 per month, and registration of unions 45 days after the application is received - the RSS-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh decided not to join ranks with other unions. BMS was in favour of giving the government some time to implement proposed reforms.

BMS, India's second largest labour union in terms of membership, however, has now decided on a protest at all districts of the country on Wednesday, to press for the implementation of the demands earlier raised. Only one of those - hike in bonus - has been acceded to so far.

S S Sharma, head of the legal cell of the BMS all-India, said, "Upward revision of minimum wages and registration of unions in 45 days of submission of the application can be implemented without long-drawn legal change. Yet, even these have not been granted. The BMS had withdrawn from the strike earlier as the government had consented to look into the demands and make the necessary changes in legal provisions for their implementation. So many months later, nothing has come of those promises."

He said that labour law amendments have been consistently anti-worker and pro-employers. The recent change in laws in Rajasthan, allowing firms employing less than 300 people to sack employees or shut down without prior approval from the government, he said, left the vast majority of workers vulnerable. Of the over 13,000 factories in the state, just about 300 have over 300 workers. Among the 12-point demands earlier raised was the need for tripartite discussions - between employees, employer and government - before bringing in amendments in labour laws.

Lalit Shukla, office secretary of the BMS office in Jaipur, said barring those working in essential services like railways and banks, BMS members working with the BSNL, belonging to local unions, in the electricity department and public health engineering department will march to the collectorate on Wednesday to press for the demands earlier raised by trade unions.