

# PRO-GROWTH REFORMS Transforming India's Labour Landscape: Labour Codes for a Vikshit Bharat

■ DR PRADEEP KUMAR JENA



Government pro-growth policies refer to strategic measures adopted by a nation to stimulate economic expansion, enhance productivity, create employment, and improve overall living standards. These policies are designed to create an enabling environment where businesses can thrive, investments can flourish, and innovation can accelerate. In recent years, governments-especially in fast-growing economies like India-have increasingly focused on structural reforms and targeted interventions to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

A key component of pro-growth governance is economic liberalisation, which includes simplifying regulations, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and improving the ease of doing business. By streamlining approval processes, promoting digital governance, and reducing compliance burdens, governments enable enterprises-particularly small and medium businesses-to operate more efficiently. These measures attract domestic as well as foreign investments, leading to job creation and technological advancements.

Infrastructure development is another pillar of growth-oriented policy. Investments in highways, rail networks, airports, ports, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure strengthen connectivity and reduce logistical costs. Robust infrastructure boosts industrial productivity, enhances market access for rural areas, and lays the foundation for long-term economic competitiveness. Large-scale public infrastructure projects also generate substantial employment opportunities.

Governments also promote growth through fiscal incentives and tax reforms. Rationalising tax structures, offering production-linked incentives, and providing subsidies for priority sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, renewable energy, and technology encourage industries to expand operations. Policies such as corporate tax reductions and incentives for start-ups help nurture entrepreneurship, which is essential for innovation-led growth.

Human capital development remains critical for sustaining economic momentum. Pro-growth governments invest heavily in education, skill development, and healthcare to build a productive workforce.

Another important aspect is promotion of digitalisation and innovation. Governments increasingly support research and development, encourage digital payments, expand high-speed internet access, and promote technology-driven sectors such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, and fintech. These initiatives help economies remain competitive in the global market.

In a landmark development, Government of India has implemented four Labour Codes with effect from 21st November 2025, bringing labour reforms enacted by the Parliament into reality. Following this, different views and news articles have surfaced in media on its impact, driving the debates and discussions on this pertinent issue. This piece is aimed to clear some of the confusions being created on the efficacy of the Codes. The Government has consistently strived to uphold the dignity of labour through various labour laws and strong social security framework. However, in order to bring about economic transformation among the labour class, availability of meaningful employment opportunities is a prerequisite and in a labour-surplus economy like India, it is unrealistic for Government to generate employment for all. This is where the private sector plays a crucial role provided enabling socio-legal framework and progressive, forward-looking labour laws are in place that reflect the aspirations of a 21st-century India.

For decades, India's labour ecosystem was governed by 29 central laws-many of which date back to the pre-independence era. To overcome the challenges of multiplicity, complexity and outdated provisions and in line with the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour (2002), the Government of India initiated one of the most far-reaching reforms in the country's labour history by enacting four comprehensive Labour Codes-the Code on Wages, 2019, the Code on Social Security, 2020, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. Remarkably, these reforms mark a

major milestone with right sequencing after the 1991 liberalisation and structural adjustment policies;bringing a modern, innovation-driven framework for progressive labour ecosystem and industrial growth.

The Labour Reform: Through rationalisation and modernisation of previous labour laws, the four Labour Codes have significantly streamlined the regulatory framework. The number of sections has been reduced from 1,228 under the previous 29 Acts to just 480, while the number of rules has come down from 1,436 to 351, forms from 181 to 73 and registers from 84 to merely 8. This significant consolidation and harmonisation will enhance both ease of living for workers and ease of doing business for employers across the country.

One of the most notable reforms under the Code on Wages is the universalisation of minimum wages, making them applicable to all employees across both the organised and unorganised sectors, which was restricted to specific 'scheduled employments' under the previous Acts.The floor wage to be determined by the Central Government will reduce the regional imbalance as the states can't set the minimum wage below the nationally defined threshold. Another progressive change is the replacement of the traditional labour 'inspector' with the 'inspector-cum-facilitator' with the mandate to guide and create awareness, marking a clear shift away from the rigid and often criticised "inspector raj". Furthermore, all four Codes have decriminalised minor offences and introduced compounding provisions for first-time violations, signalling a move from a punitive to a corrective and trust-based regulatory approach.

The Industrial Relations (IR) Code introduces the concept of Fixed Term Employment (FTE), ensuring that fixed-term workers receive the same benefits as permanent employees, including gratuity after one year of

service. This reform provides industries with much-needed flexibility to hire according to operational requirements while safeguarding the rights and welfare of workers.This will reduce contractualisation. The 14-day notice period before strikes and lockouts by the workers will promote industrial peace and harmony, which under the previous law was applicable only to public utility services. This change will encourage the resolution of disputes through dialogue and negotiation rather than disruption.Additionally, the Code provides statutory recognition to trade unions, something missed out in the media analysis,through the 'Negotiating Union' or 'Negotiating Council', thereby strengthening collective bargaining mechanisms and promoting labour welfare.The Code also revises the threshold for prior government approval in cases of retrenchment, lay-offs, and closures from the existing 100 workers to 300 workers in factories, mines, and plantations.

The most ambitious reform carried out in this process is through the Code on Social Security, that formally recognises the gig and platform workers for the first time. With this, India becomes one of the first countries in the world to extend legal and social protection to this emerging work force.It also provides for the creation of a Social Security Fund with multiple financing mechanism to support unorganized including the gig and platform workers through various welfare schemes, thereby taking a major step toward inclusive and equitable labour welfare.

Likewise, the OSH code that governs the provisions related to workplace safety, welfare, and working conditions of the workers introduces single registration, single license and single return-a major step toward ease of doing business in the country with license validity for five years. Importantly, it promotes gender equality by allowing women to work in all sectors and during night shifts, with their consent

and adequate safety measures. It also mandates free annual health check-ups for workers and the issuance of appointment letters to all employees leading the way to formalization.Additionally, the Code raises the applicability thresholds, thereby reducing the compliance burden on smaller establishments. For instance, for the applicability of contract labour; the threshold increased from 20 to 50, for applicability of factory provisions, from 10 to 20 workers and 20 to 40 workers (with and without power respectively). These changes collectively create a more streamlined, worker-friendly and business-conducive regulatory environment.

Towards a Vikshit Bharat: The four labour codes collectively seek to strike a balance between the welfare of workers and the flexibility of the industry and employers. By streamlining definitions, digitizing compliance, and promoting gender neutrality, the four labour codes are designed to usher into an equitable labour eco-system, matching the country's aspiration of a Vikshit Bharat by 2047. The Institute for Studies in Industrial Development's (ISID) India Industrial Development Report 2024-25 suggests that, there is significant manufacturing opportunity available in India with the Government of India's policies of 'Making-for-India and Making-for-the-World' which are labour, skill and resource intensive. The country has potential to more than double the manufacturing value added (MVA) from US\$ 717 billion in 2024 to \$1.45 trillion by 2030, out of the \$7.5 trillion GDP, therefore, eventually creating millions of decent jobs both direct and indirect. Implementation of the four Labour Codes will complement the effort to provide the industries, much needed flexibility and deregulation with mandates of universal labour welfare and social security for our workforce.

(The Author is the Director, Ministry of Labour & Employment)

## India's GDP Jumps to 8.2% Amid Global Challenges

■ PUPUJI KOUL

India's recent 8.2 percent GDP expansion stands as a conspicuous testament to the nation's economic tenacity, entrenched structural robustness, and the intrinsic vitality of its macroeconomic foundations. This extraordinary performance, which has eclipsed the prognostications of economists and even the Reserve Bank of India, has elicited widespread commendation for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the entire NDA administration, the industrial fraternity, and, above all, the Indian populace whose indefatigable enterprise and burgeoning consumption have substantially undergirded this stupendous outcome. The second-quarter data for FY 2025-26 has unveiled an epochal surge in real GDP, reaching 8.2 percent-an achievement that is anything but quotidian, and one that dramatically signals the accelerated maturation of India's economic trajectory despite formidable external constraints. This resplendent growth narrative underscores that Indian citizens indulged in vigorous discretionary and essential expenditure, thereby propelling domestic demand to unprecedented thresholds. At a time when India is confronted with external

adversities-most notably the 50 percent tariff impositions instituted by U.S. President Donald Trump in August 2025-the nation's economic engine has not merely withstood these affronts but has transcended them with emphatic resilience. The tariffs, once construed as potentially disruptive, have proven largely ineffectual against India's expanding economic dynamism, thereby validating the potency of pro-growth reforms and structural recalibrations executed over the past decade.

According to the latest official computations, India's real GDP growth for Q2 FY 2025-26 surged to 8.2 percent, a dramatic escalation from the 5.6 percent recorded during the corresponding quarter of the preceding fiscal. Similarly, quarter one registered a remarkable 7.8 percent rise compared to the 6.5 percent observed in Q1 FY 2024-25. The continuity of such elevated growth metrics not only consolidates India's status as the fastest-expanding major economy globally but also propels expectations that the full-year GDP figure will comfortably exceed the 7 percent threshold. This resurgence, even amid torrid global conditions, is emblematic of an economy governed by calibrated policy impulses and thriving on its internal engines of consumption

and production. India's economic constitution is fundamentally domestic-consumption-centric, and this intrinsic feature has buffered the nation from the volatility of external trade frictions. The substantial income-tax revisions, accompanied by sweeping rationalisations in GST, have further invigorated household purchasing power. While uncertainties linger around the contours of a prospective India-U.S. trade arrangement, the internal scaffolding of demand has remained steadfast. The manufacturing sector, in particular, has manifested a monumental upswing-expanding by 9 percent, nearly quadruple the previous year's pace. This resurgence has been complemented by vigorous performances in construction, real estate, financial services, public administration, defence, and ancillary sectors. Yet, amid these auspicious developments, economists have flagged a disquieting caveat: the conspicuous deceleration in nominal GDP growth even as real GDP accelerates. In developing economies such as India, nominal GDP typically outpaces real GDP due to inflationary pressures. However, the unprecedented decline in wholesale inflation-coupled with subdued price escalation in consumer markets-has engendered an anomalous contraction in

nominal expansion. While this environment offers salutary benefits to consumers via moderating prices, it simultaneously imposes complexities on fiscal arithmetic, particularly for revenue projections and deficit management.

Prime Minister Modi has interpreted the 8.2 percent GDP increment as a vigorous affirmation of the government's reformist ethos, attributing the buoyancy equally to policy sagacity and the indefatigable industriousness of ordinary Indians. The administration has reiterated its commitment to amplifying economic liberalisation, augmenting ease of living, and broadening avenues of opportunity for all citizens. Such growth, in the Prime Minister's articulation, augurs a future where aspirations of affordable education, sophisticated healthcare infrastructure, efficient transportation systems, enhanced societal security, and broader employment opportunities-particularly for women-can be more attainable. The Q2 data delineated by the National Statistical Office reveals that India's real GDP for the period stands at Rs 48.63 lakh crore, ascending from Rs 44.94 lakh crore the year before. Nominal GDP, estimated at Rs 85.25 lakh crore, expanded by 8.7 percent. These figures, surpassing analytical consensus, bolster

confidence in India's long-term growth trajectory, a sentiment echoed by Moody's, which views the latest data as corroborative of India's ascension toward becoming the world's third-largest economy by 2030, with a projected GDP of USD 7.3 trillion. That India has managed to record the strongest growth in six quarters amid global monetary tightening, supply-chain fragilities, and geopolitical tumult further exemplifies the structural solidity and autonomy of the Indian economic model.

One of the most consequential undercurrents of this growth cycle has been the emphatic revival of rural demand. Rising agricultural productivity, stable agrarian incomes, and more resilient labour markets in rural geographies have catalysed a mass-consumption resurgence. As a result, sectors integrally tied to rural purchasing behaviour-including two-wheelers, FMCG products, fertilizers, construction materials, and rural credit-experienced substantial volumetric escalations. This rural resuscitation effectively countervailed the tepid urban discretionary consumption, which continues to be constrained by uneven wage accretion and high leverage in middle-income households. Simultaneously, the secondary sectors have exhibited resounding resurgence,

with manufacturing and construction outpacing most other domains. The manufacturing sector's 9.1 percent surge, up from 2.2 percent a year earlier, signals a structural recalibration driven by productivity enhancements, supply-chain realignments, and intensified industrial demand. Construction expanded by 7.2 percent, buoyed by infrastructure proliferation and broad-based capital deployment. India's economic efflorescence has been undergirded by several cardinal pillars: a synchronous rise in manufacturing and services; unprecedented moderation in inflation; reinvigorated domestic consumption; improved labour-market indicators; and an unmistakable march toward global economic preponderance. Taken together, these forces illuminate an economic paradigm that is not merely recuperating from global perturbations but veritably surpassing earlier expectations. In essence, the 8.2 percent GDP growth rate functions as a formidable barometer of India's resilience and institutional fortitude. It embodies the tangible fruition of pro-growth strategies and encapsulates a broader narrative of an economy accelerating on the back of domestic potency, strategic governance, and the indefatigable aspirations of its citizens.

## Health Benefits of Millets: For Diabetes, Gut Health, Weight Management and More

■ SOLDIER AND MONK INTRODUCTION

The comeback of India's ancient super food, Millets often called "the ancient grains of India" are making a powerful return to our kitchens and for good reason. Long before rice and wheat dominated our plates, millets were a staple in almost every Indian household. They grow easily in harsh climates, required minimal water and kept people strong, lean and energetic. Today as lifestyle diseases like diabetes, obesity and poor gut health rise sharply, millets are being rediscovered as a natural solution. These humble grains pack incredible nutrition and have scientific proven benefits for modern day health concerns.

**MILLETS AND DIABETES- A NATURAL BLOOD SUGAR BALANCER**

One of the most remarkable health benefits of millets lies in their ability to regulate blood sugar levels. Unlike refined rice or wheat, millets have a low Glycemic Index(GI) meaning they release sugar slowly into the bloodstream. This prevents sudden spikes and crashes in blood glucose. Millets like foxtail, Barnyard and little millet are particularly beneficial for diabetes as they are rich in dietary fibre, magnesium and complex carbohydrates. Studies have shown that regular inclusion of millets can reduce fasting blood sugar and improve insulin sensitivity. Replace polished rice with Foxtail or Barnyard millet khichdi twice a week. Combine it with green leafy vegetables and a spoon of ghee for balanced nutrition and steady energy.

**MILLETS AND GUT HEALTH- FEED YOUR SECOND BRAIN**

Your gut is home to trillions of bacteria that affect everything from digestion to mood. Millets being rich in soluble and insoluble fibre, act as a natural pro-biotic, feeding the good bacteria in your gut. Regular millet consumption promotes smooth digestion, reduces constipation



tion and helps maintain a healthy gut lining. Millets like Kodo, Little and Browntop millets are excellent choices for those suffering from acidity, bloating or sluggish digestion. In Ayurveda, millets are considered "laghu- light and easy to digest when prepared properly(soaked, cooked or fermented). This makes them perfect for people with sensitive stomachs or those recovering from digestive issues. Try a simple fermented Ragi porridge or Kodo millet dosa, its gut friendly, filling and naturally pro-biotic when fermented overnight.

**MILLETS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT- SMALL GRAINS, BIG RESULTS**

If you are trying to manage weight without starving yourself, millets are your best friend. Their high fibre and protein content keep you full for longer, reducing unnecessary snacking and overeating. Unlike calorie restrictive diets, millet based meals offer sustained energy, helping you stay active throughout the day. Millets

also promote better metabolism and improve hormones like Leptin. Among the best options for weight control are Jowar and Foxtail millet, as they provide slow digesting carbs and plant based protein that support fat-loss and muscle maintenance. Replace your evening snack with a bowl of Ragi, Upma or Jowar Chivda. You will feel, energised and guilt-free.

**MILLETS AND HEART HEALTH- SMALL SEEDS, STRONG HEART**

Millets are loaded with magnesium, potassium and antioxidants that help regulate blood pressure, reduce cholesterol and support overall cardiovascular health. The presence of Vitamin B3 in millets aids in lowering LDL(bad cholesterol) while maintaining HDL(good cholesterol). Incorporating millets like Bajra and Ragi into your diet can help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress both major causes of heart diseases. A Bajra vegetable khichdi with turmeric and garlic makes a perfect heart

friendly meal packed with fibre and antioxidants.

**MILLETS FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH AND BONE STRENGTH**

Millets particularly Ragi are rich in calcium and iron, making them excellent for bone health and combating anaemia. Women especially during pregnancy and menopause, benefit immensely from millet rich diets. Regular consumption supports hormonal balance, maintains bone density and prevents fatigue. Include a glass of Ragi malt or Ragi porridge with jiggery and milk in your breakfast routine, a natural multivitamin drink from our grand mother's kitchen.

**HOW TO INCLUDE MILLETS IN YOUR EVERYDAY DIET**

Switching to millets doesn't need to be drastic. Start small and enjoy the process.

Replace white rice with Foxtail or Barnyard millet twice a week.

Make Jowar or Bajra rotis instead of wheat.

Try Ragi dosa, millet idli or khichdi for breakfast or dinner.

Experiment with millet laddoos, kheer or cookies for guilt free desserts.

Consistency is the key, once your body adopts, you will naturally start craving these wholesome grains.

**CONCLUSION- A HEALTH REVOLUTION ROOTED IN TRADITION**

Millets aren't just ancient grains, they are modern nutrition powerhouses from managing diabetes and weight to healing your gut and protecting your heart. They cover almost every aspect of health. Reintroducing millets into our diets is not just a nutritional choice but a return to balance, sustainability and wisdom that our ancestors always practiced. So the next time you plan your meal, remember every spoonful of millet is a step toward better health, a stronger body and a greener planet.

## Women Empowerment and Patriarchy: A Changing Social Reality

■ BHARTI SHARMA



Women are the backbone of every society. They raise families, support communities, and contribute in countless ways. Since the 6th century BC, during the Later Vedic Period, women have been suppressed and discriminated against under a system called patriarchy. In this system, men are traditionally seen as the primary decision-makers, while women are expected to follow certain fixed roles. This has limited their freedom, education, and opportunities. Today, the world is changing. People are becoming more aware, and the idea of equality is growing stronger. Women empowerment has become one of the most important needs of our time. Empowerment simply means giving women the right to live with freedom, confidence, and dignity. It means allowing them to study, work, make decisions, and chase their dreams without fear or restrictions. Even though progress has started, challenges still remain. In many places, women still face discrimination. Sometimes their voices are ignored, sometimes their safety is at risk, and sometimes they are judged for choosing a different path. These are all signs that patriarchal thinking still exists. But change is visible. Women today are becoming doctors, pilots, police officers, entrepreneurs, scientists, and leaders. They are proving every day that they can do anything when given the right support. Their success is not just good for them; it is good for the entire nation. An example of this modern change is visible in Operation Sindoor. During this military operation, two women officers - Wing Commander Vyomika Singh and Col Sofiya Qureshi - played a key role in briefing the media and leading the operation's execution. The fact that women pilots and officers take part in such crucial military operations shows how far women empowerment has come, and how patriarchy's old limits are being challenged. To truly end patriarchy, society must understand one simple truth: men and women are equal. Families should support daughters and sons equally, without any discrimination. Schools should teach children the value of respect and equality. Workplaces should give women the same chances as men. Women empowerment is not an agenda against men - it is a movement for a better, more balanced, and fair society. When women grow, the whole country grows with them. In the end, the dream is simple: a world where every woman can speak freely, walk safely, study fearlessly, and live proudly. A world where empowerment is not just a word, but a reality for every girl and woman.

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