

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Addresses Post-Budget Webinar on “Investing in People”

India’s social security coverage has doubled from 24.4% to 48.8% - Dr. Mandaviya

10 new ESIC medical colleges have been approved, with plans for 10 more in the pipeline: Union Minister

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A Post-Budget Webinar on the theme “Investing in People” was organized today via video conferencing, bringing together senior government officials, academia, and industry representatives.

Addressing the post-budget webinar on the theme ‘Investing in People’, Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, emphasized that a nation's greatest asset is its people. He outlined the government’s mission to skill and empower India’s youth, ensuring that Indian talent makes a global impact. Highlighting the roadmap for Viksit Bharat by 2047, he stated that investing in people is not just an economic decision but a social, moral, and cultural commitment toward an educated, healthy, and empowered society.



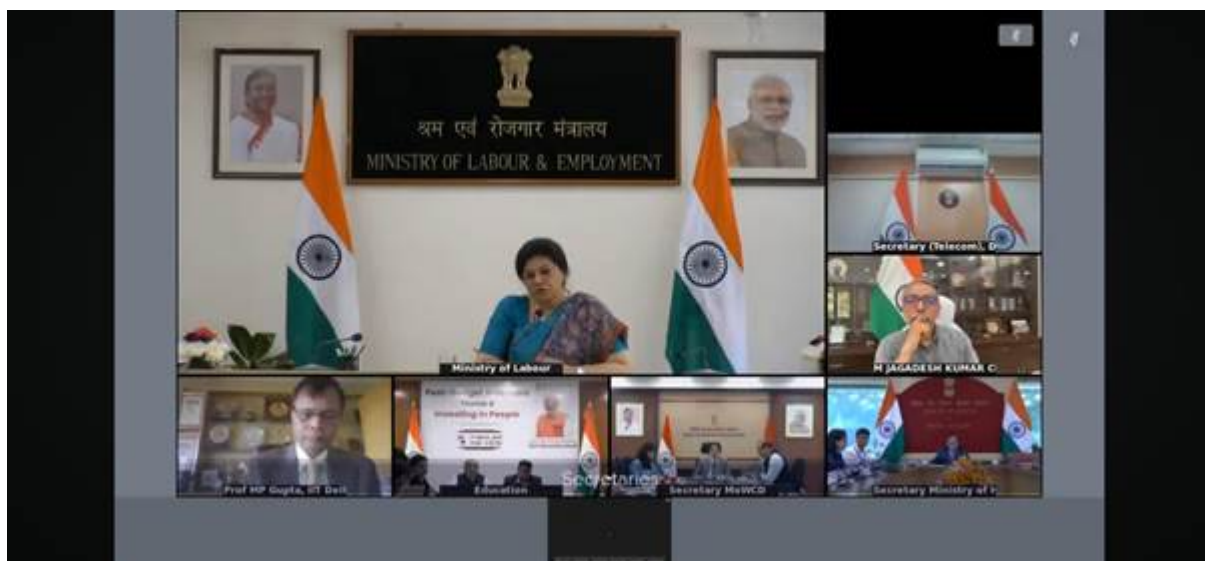
Dr. Mandaviya presented data underscoring the success of employment initiatives, revealing that 17.1 crore jobs were created between 2014-24, including 4.6 crore in the past year alone. He noted a significant drop in

unemployment rates, from 6% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2023-24, and a remarkable rise in female employment from 22% to 40.3% in the same period. Union minister credited these achievements to India's progressive policies, which have strengthened the country's workforce.

Dr. Mandaviya also addressed the impact of social security initiatives, citing the ILO World Social Security Report 2024-26, which highlights India's social security coverage doubling from 24.4% to 48.8%. The expansion of the e-Shram Portal, covering over 30.67 crore unorganised workers, and the inclusion of gig workers under PMJAY, reinforce the government's commitment to workforce welfare, he stated. The government has also integrated 12 key welfare schemes under e-Shram and has made the portal available in 22 Indian languages, he mentioned. Additionally, to support workers' families, 10 new ESIC medical colleges have been approved, with plans for 10 more in the pipeline, he added.

Concluding his address, Dr. Mandaviya reaffirmed that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India's investment in its people is shaping a stronger, self-reliant nation, ensuring long-term benefits for future generations.

During the thematic segment, Secretary (Labour & Employment), Ms. Sumita Dawra drew attention to major strides in modernizing the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), including the enrolment of over 6.2 crore new members in six-and-a-half years and reforms such as centralized pension processing system, auto-settlement of PF claims, and robust IT infrastructure. Alongside these achievements, Ms. Dawra underscored the ESIC expansion—from 2.03 crore insured persons (IPs) in 2014 to 3.72 crore in 2024—and the growing healthcare network across 165 hospitals and 1590 dispensaries. Additionally, she emphasized advances in Technological Development—notably the e-Shram and National Career Service portals—and the G20 Feasibility Study on Development of International Reference Classification, which aims to benchmark skills globally by 2026.



Parallel breakout session on Para 51 of the Union Budget 2025-26 - Social Security for Online Platform Workers

Mr. Ajoy Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, set the context for the breakout session on the topic "Social Security Scheme for Welfare of Online Platform Workers". He reiterated the provisions in Para 51 of the Union Budget 2025, which covered providing of identity cards and registration on the e-Shram portal, along with healthcare coverage under PM Jan Arogya Yojana, to nearly 1 crore gig workers. He impressed upon the Panel of experts to explore importance of strategic planning, identification of beneficiaries, defining eligibility criteria, and leveraging technology to ensure sustainable financing for comprehensive social security benefits. The breakout session saw a discussion with a panel of expert panel who provided insights for strengthening the implementation mechanism of the scheme, addressed implementation challenges, and potential mitigation strategies. Mr. Sharma thanked the panelists for their valuable insights on global best practices, gender considerations, and the critical role of platform aggregators.

Summation of Breakaway Session by Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment

Summarizing the session's key outcomes, Secretary (L&E) Ms. Sumita Dawra noted broad consensus on the

imperative to extend social protection to the burgeoning gig and platform sector. Panelists observed that platform work has grown exponentially—from 0.54% of total workers in 2011-12 to 1.33% in 2019-20—and urged swift action to bring these workers under a robust social security net. The discussion underscored four major areas:

- **Registration & Identification:** Leveraging the aggregator module on the e-Shram portal to ensure comprehensive coverage and seamless issuance of unique ID cards.
- **Eligibility & Targeting:** Introducing clear criteria, including duration of engagement and income thresholds, to cover bona fide platform workers while excluding those already in formal employment.
- **Role of Technology:** Emphasizing data-driven solutions for transparency and efficiency, particularly for overlapping platform engagements and ensuring portability of benefits.
- **Sustainable Financing:** Encouraging contribution from aggregators and workers, alongside Government support, to sustain long-term benefits such as healthcare, life/disability cover, and pension schemes.

Ms. Dawra added that integrating women into the platform ecosystem will be pivotal to raising female labour force participation, given the flexibility it offers and the potential to empower millions of aspiring women entrepreneurs and workers. She reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to working closely with stakeholders to finalize the social security scheme for platform workers.

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