

HIGHLIGHTS OF IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Ministry of Labour is one of the oldest and important Ministries of the Government of India. The main responsibility of the Ministry is to protect and safeguard the interests of workers in general and those who constitute the poor, deprived and disadvantaged sections of the society, in particular, with due regard to creating a healthy work environment for higher production and productivity and to develop and coordinate vocational skill training and employment services. Government's attention is also focused on promotion of welfare and providing social security to the labour force both in organized and unorganized sectors, in tandem with the process of liberalization. These objectives are sought to be achieved through enactment and implementation of various labour laws, which regulate the terms and conditions of service and employment of workers. The State Governments are also competent to enact legislations, as labour is a subject in the concurrent list under the Constitution of India.

A number of legislative and executive initiatives have been taken to promote, protect and preserve health, safety and social security for workers through observance of the ethos and culture of tripartism. Some of the important initiatives taken during the year in this regard are highlighted as below: -

SECOND NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR

1.2 The Report of Second National Commission on Labour (NCL), submitted to the Government on 29.06.2002, has made wide ranging recommendations on various facets of labour viz. review of laws, social security, women & child labour, skill development, labour administration, unorganized sector etc. The Ministry has already held intensive consultations and interactions with the workers representatives, employers' organizations, experts & professionals etc. The Report of the Commission has been discussed in various fora including the Consultative Committee Meetings held on 07.02.2003 and 30.04.2003, the Standing Labour Committee (SLC) Meeting held on 25th July, 2003 and the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) Meeting held on 16-18 October, 2003.

STRENGTHENING OF TRIPARTISM DURING 2003-04

1.3 The Ministry of Labour has always been striving to promote harmonious industrial relations in the country. The Government, being committed to the ethos and culture of tripartism, took measures to revitalize it. The Ministry continues to have consultation with the social partners to obtain a consensus for enacting new laws or bringing about changes in the existing laws. The objective of the Ministry is to knit the views of all the social partners in framing the policy for working class. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labour held several tripartite meetings of various Committees / Boards during the year which inter-alia include 39th Session of the Standing Labour Committee on 25.07.2003, Tripartite Conference on Occupational Safety & Health on 17.09.2003, Labour & Health Ministers' Conference on 18.09.2003, 39th Session of Indian Labour Conference on 16-18 October, 2003 and meeting of the Central Advisory Board under Minimum Wages Act, 1948 held twice on 19.12.2003 and 13.02.2004.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

1.4 Maintenance of harmonious industrial relations situation remains an avowed objective of Ministry of Labour. Due to constant endeavour of the Industrial Relations Machineries, both Central and the State, the overall industrial relations climate has remained peaceful and cordial, although on year to year basis, both the number of strikes and lockouts and mandays lost due to them have shown variations. However, over a period of last ten years i.e. 1994 to 2003 (provisional), the number of strikes and lockouts has reduced drastically from 1201 to 489 while the mandays lost due to them have increased marginally from 20.98 million to 21.78 million.

1.5 Similarly, the spatial / industry-wise dispersion of the number of strikes and lockouts and the workers involved / affected as a result of this is not uniform. Among States, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat were the most affected. Among the industry groups, textiles, engineering, chemicals and coal mining recorded the maximum number of strikes and lockouts.

1.6 With a view to strengthen the existing adjudicating system, five new Central Government Industrial Tribunal-cum-Labour Courts have been set up in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Ernakulam, Guwahati and Chandigarh. This Ministry has also introduced a system of Lok Adalats, as an alternative dispute redressal mechanism, in the adjudication system of the CGCT-cum-Labour Courts to reduce the pendency of industrial disputes. So far 22 Lok Adalats were held and 271 cases settled therein.

MANISANA WAGE BOARDS

1.7 The Government has accepted the Manisana Wage Board Award for Journalists and non-Journalists employed in the newspaper industry with some minor modifications, which significantly improved the wage structure and allowances of Journalists and non-Journalists employed in the newspaper industry.

1.8 With a view to ensure implementation of the Award, all States and UTs have specifically been advised to set up Tripartite Committees / Implementation Cells for speedy and effective implementation of Awards and to furnish progress report on quarterly basis. Besides, a Central Level Monitoring Committee has also been constituted under the Chairmanship of Labour & Employment Adviser for reviewing the implementation of the Awards. It was decided in the meetings that Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) through his Regional Labour Commissioners (Central) would liaise with State Governments with regard to effective implementation of the awards. Involvement of Regional Labour Commissioners (Central) has yielded better results.

INDIAN LABOUR CONFERENCE

1.9 The 39th Session of Indian Labour Conference held on 16-18 October, 2003, deliberated on following agenda items: -

- Report of the Second National Commission on Labour - with emphasis on rationalization of labour laws and unorganized labour.
- Social Security issues pertaining to the EPF and ESIC with special emphasis on social security needs for the large unorganized sector workforce.
- Employment generation, employment protection and skill sector upgradation – with special emphasis on the S.P. Gupta Report on Employment Generation.

1.10 The outcome is summarized as below: -

- (i) There was general consensus on skill development, skill upgradation and training, formulation of an Annual Employment Plan at the National, State and even District level, re-modeling of Employment Exchanges etc. The need was felt for creation of an Employment Security Fund for unorganized sector workers and greater integration of the existing schemes of social security for the organized sector workers.
- (ii) The Indian Labour Conference unanimously recommended the need for Umbrella Legislation for the Unorganized Sector Workers. Further, it recommended constitution of a high powered and multi-stakeholder National Social Security Council to evolve, oversee and coordinate social security policies and schemes, etc. It also recommended that the State Governments should play a major role in the implementation of the various social security schemes.
- (iii) In regard to rationalization of labour laws, social partners expressed divergent views and no consensus could emerge.

VULNERABLE SECTIONS

Child Labour

1.11 India has all along followed a proactive policy in the matter of tackling the problem of child labour by undertaking constitutional, statutory and developmental measures that are required for its elimination. Under the National Child Labour Policy, 100 National Child Labour Projects (NCLPs) are in operation in 13 child labour endemic States for rehabilitation of about 2.11 lakh working children. A major activity undertaken under the NCLP is the establishment of special schools to provide non-formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition, stipend, health care etc. to children withdrawn from employment. So far, 1.87 lakh children from special schools of NCLPs have been mainstreamed into formal education system. The target is to eliminate child labour in a sequential manner, beginning with its elimination from hazardous occupations through a determined and focused effort and progressively move towards its complete elimination from other occupations. Besides a large number of NGOs are working for elimination of child labour under the grant-in-aid scheme.

1.12 Apart from continuing the existing 100 NCLPs during the Tenth Plan, Government has approved setting up of additional 150 NCLPs, in child labour endemic districts during the 10th Plan. The expanded scheme in additional 50 districts has already been launched in January, 2004 and states have been asked to set up NCLPs in these identified 50 Districts. In the remaining 100 Districts, the scheme would be launched after additional 100 districts are identified on the basis of the 2001 Census Report which is in process. Government has also launched the INDO-US (INDUS) Child Labour Project on 16.02.2004 during the visit of Mr. Arnold Levine, Deputy Under Secretary, US Department of Labour and Mr. Kari Tapiola, Executive Director, International Labour Organisation to India.

Women Labour

1.13 The Government is committed to improve the working conditions of women workers. In this direction, guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment of women employees in their workplaces have been framed. Simultaneously, instructions have been issued to the Central Ministries / Departments, State Governments / UT Administrations and all CPSUs for strict implementation of the

guidelines. The Conduct Rules applicable to the Central government and the All India Services have since been amended to give effect to these guidelines. The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946 have also been amended to make the guidelines applicable to employees in the private sector.

Bonded Labour

1.14 In order to assist the State Governments in their task of rehabilitation of released bonded labourers, the Ministry of Labour has been implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme since May, 1978 for rehabilitation of bonded labourers. Under this Scheme, rehabilitation assistance of Rs.20,000/- per freed bonded labour is provided which is shared by the Central and State Governments on 50:50 basis. In case of the seven North Eastern States, 100% Central assistance is provided. Under the scheme, Central grants are also provided to the State Governments for conducting district wise survey of bonded labour, awareness generation and evaluatory studies. The entire amount of Rs.250 lakh has been utilized for rehabilitation of 2268 bonded labourers during 2003-04.

SOCIAL SECURITY

1.15 The Government has enacted a number of legislations in the area of Social Security for the workers. The important Acts in this regard are the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961, the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 and the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. Several initiatives have been recently taken to accord larger benefits to workers under these Acts as detailed below: -

- The minimum amount of compensation payable under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 has been enhanced from Rs.50,000/- to Rs.80,000/- in case of death and from Rs.60,000/- to Rs.90,000/- in case of permanent total disablement with effect from 08.12.2000. From the same date, the ceiling of the maximum amount of compensation has been doubled from Rs.2.28 lakh to Rs.4.56 lakh in case of death and from Rs.2.74 lakh to Rs.5.48 lakh in case of permanent total disablement.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

1.16 The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 provides for compulsory provident fund, pension and deposit linked insurance in factories / establishments employing 20 or more employees in scheduled industries, which is implemented through offices of Employees Provident Fund Organisation. The achievements are as under:

- The coverage of benefits of PF, family pension and deposit linked insurance increased from 2.31 crore subscribers as on 31.03.1998 to nearly 3.95 crore subscribers as on 31.03.2003.
- A nationally unique Social Security Number for each worker would be provided. The scheme was launched by way of a Reinventing – EPF India programme on 25.02.2003 so as to reduce claim settlement from 30 days to 2-3 days only.
- A new Directorate of recovery has been approved to step up recovery of EPF dues.

- Additional facilities of disbursement of pension through 26000 post offices has been introduced so as to benefit the workers who after retirement go back to their native places located in rural and far flung areas.

Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)

1.17 To provide for health care and cash benefits in the case of sickness, maternity and employment injuries, the Employees State Insurance Act was enacted in 1948. The Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) is implementing the ESI Scheme introduced in 1952. The achievements are as under:

- ESI Scheme has a network of 142 Hospitals, 43 Annexes and 1452 Dispensaries, 2900 clinics and 840 local offices covering 3.12 crore beneficiaries.
- One ESI Hospital each in 16 major States would be upgraded as a Model Hospital with Budget outlay of Rs.150 crore.
- The wage ceiling for coverage under ESI Scheme has been increased from Rs.6500/- to Rs.7500/- per month with effect from 01.04.2004.
- A revolving fund of Rs.40 crore has been created for super-specialty treatment.
- Over 6 lakh low paid workers drawing wages upto Rs.40/- per day has been exempted from contribution to the ESI Scheme.
- Four more long-term diseases have been added in the list of 29 chronic diseases for entitlement.
- Ceiling of medical benefits to each insured person has been increased from Rs.600/- to Rs.700/- per annum.
- Maternity benefit increased from Rs.250/- to Rs.1000/-.
- Ceiling for commutation of partial disablement benefit raised from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.30,000/-.

WELFARE OF WORKERS IN UNORGANISED SECTOR

1.18 As a major policy decision, the Ministry has decided to provide social security benefits to the workers in the unorganized sector who constitute around 92% of over 400 million strong workforce in the country. To begin with, the Government has introduced the Social Security Scheme for the unorganized sector workers on a pilot basis in 50 districts of the country, which was launched on 23.01.2004. The funding pattern, benefit and institutions involved are summarized below: -

- The Social Security Scheme will cover all the workers in the unorganized sector drawing pay/wages/income not more than Rs.6500/- per month. The scheme will be financed by the contributions from workers at the rates of Rs.50/- per month in the age group of 18-35 years and Rs.100/- per month in the age group of 36-50. The contribution from the employers, wherever identifiable, will be Rs.100/- per month per worker and Government contribution will be @ 1.16% of the monthly wages of the worker.
- The scheme provides triple benefits to the workers i.e.: -
 - (i) A flat rate registered pension of Rs.500/- per month on retirement at the age of 60 years and total disablement and family pension in case of death of the worker.
 - (ii) A personal accident insurance cover for rupees one lakh; and

- (iii) Convergence of the Universal Health Insurance Scheme for a worker and his family at the cost of Rs.548/- per annum for a family of five members or Rs.365/- per annum for a family of three members.
- The coverage, compliance, registration, record keeping and the benefit delivery will be handled by the EPFO using available market intermediaries like workers facilitation centres, facilitators like Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs, Self Help Groups, branches of the designated Banks and Post Offices.

Minimum Wages

1.19 On the basis of recommendations of Central Advisory Board in its meeting held on 19.12.2003, the national minimum wage has been raised from Rs.50/- to Rs.66/- per day with effect from 01.02.2004. All the State Governments and Union Territories have been asked to ensure that the minimum wages in any of the scheduled employments is not below Rs.66/- per day under their jurisdictions.

LABOUR WELFARE FUNDS

1.20 The Ministry took several measures to further improve the Welfare schemes formulated for beedi, non-coal mine and cine workers. The thrust of the welfare schemes is in the health sector as target groups are involved in health hazardous occupations. The eligibility ceiling limit has been revised from Rs.6500/- p.m. to Rs.10,000/-p.m. w.e.f. 26.2.2001 for Limestone & Dolomite Mines Workers, from Rs.3500/- to Rs.10,000/-p.m. during April, 2003 for beedi workers and from Rs.1600/- to Rs.8000/- w.e.f. 02.09.2002 for cine workers so as extend benefits under various welfare schemes excepting housing scheme. The corpus of Beedi Workers' Welfare Fund has been increased from Rs.21 crore to Rs.40 crore to undertake more welfare activities.

WELFARE FUND FOR OVERSEAS INDIAN WORKERS

1.21 A Bill for setting up a Central Manpower Export Promotion Council and the Indian Overseas Workers' Welfare Fund by amending the Emigration Act, 1983, in order to protect and safeguard the interests of Indian workers going abroad for employment on contractual basis, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 21.11.2002. The Hon'ble Prime Minister on the occasion of the first "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" held on 9.1.2003 announced the compulsory Insurance Scheme for the emigrants going abroad for employment. In pursuance of this announcement, a compulsory Insurance Scheme known as "Pravasi Bharitya Bima Yojana 2003" has been notified on 13.11.2003. This scheme has come into force w.e.f. 25.12.2003.

AMENDMENT IN LABOUR LAWS

1.22 Review / updation of labour laws is a continuous process in order to bring them in tune with the prevailing situation and emerging needs of the economy. Reforms in labour laws in recent years have been necessitated with a view to make Indian industry efficient, cost effective and internationally competitive in the face of globalisation process. The Ministry has initiated steps to amend certain labour laws. The results achieved during the year in the area of labour reforms are: -

The Factories Act, 1948

1.23 The Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2003 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 29.07.2003. The Bill propose to amend Section 66 of the Factories Act, 1948 so as to provide flexibility in the matter of employment of women during night with adequate safeguards for their safety, dignity, honour and transportation from the factory premises to the nearest point of their residence. The Bill was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and Welfare on 27.8.2003 for examination and report. The Committee has finalized its report and laid it on the Table of the Parliament on 24.12.2003. The recommendations of the Committee are under examination.

The Emigration Act, 1983

1.24 With a view to enabling the Central Government to constitute a Central Manpower Export Promotion Council and for setting up of an Indian Overseas Workers' Welfare Fund, the Emigration Amendment Bill, 2003 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 21.11.2002. The Bill has been referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament on Labour for examination and report. The Committee has finalized its report and laid it on the Table of the Parliament on 16.12.2003. The recommendations of the Committee are under examination.

The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970

1.25 With a view to facilitate the outsourcing of certain activities of an establishment and at the same time to protect the interests of contract labour in terms of wages, social security, welfare, health and safety, consequent to Court judgments and feedback received from social partners, a proposal was prepared by the Ministry of Labour for enacting a new law on Contract Labour.

1.26 The Hon'ble Prime Minister constituted a Group of Ministers (GOM) to examine these proposals before the same is brought before the Cabinet. The Ministry of Law & Justice (Legislative Department) has been requested to draft the amendment proposals, which would be placed before the Group of Ministers for its finalization.

The Payment of Wages Act, 1936

1.27 The amendment bill to remove ambiguities and to enhance the wage ceiling in the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on 16.05.2002, which was referred to the Department Related Standing Committee of Parliament on Labour and Welfare. The Standing Committee has finalized its report and laid it on the Table of the Parliament on 21.11.2002. The recommendations of the Committee have been accepted with a minor modification and the observations of the Ministry of Law and Justice have been obtained. A proposal to introduce an official amendment in the Bill is being submitted for consideration of the Cabinet.

Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintenance of Registers by Certain Establishments) Act, 1988

1.28 The Central Government is proposing to bring the amendment in the Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintenance of Registers by Certain Establishments) Act, 1988 to simplify the forms of returns and registers prescribed in various labour laws in the enterprises employing upto 500 persons. Under the proposal, only one annual report is required to be submitted and only two registers

would be maintained at the work spot. It also provides for maintenance of registers on computer and furnishing of the annual return through e-mail.

AWARDS

1.29 The Hon'ble Prime Minister distributed the Prime Minister's Shram Awards on 25.4.2003 for the year 2001 to 37 workers including 1 woman. The awards for the years 2002 & 2003 were announced on 25th January, 2003 and 14th Aug, 2003, respectively. The number of awards has also been increased to 33 from the present 17. Further, an award of Shram Veerangana has also been introduced alongwith Shram Vir. These are given in recognition of contributions towards production & productivity, technological innovation, cost saving, import substitution, savings of foreign exchange as also for showing exemplary zeal and enthusiasm in the discharge of duties.

1.30 From the year 2004, the private sector units employing more than 500 workers will also be brought within the ambit of the Prime Minister's Shram Awards.

1.31 Vishwakarma Rashtriya Puraskar (VRPs) and National Safety Awards for the years 2001 and 2002 were distributed by the Union Labour Minister on 17th September, 2003 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. In all, 18 awards each under three classes were given to 38 and 58 winners for the year 2001 and 2002 respectively.

1.32 Vishwakarma Rashtriya Puraskar are given in recognition of outstanding suggestions given by a worker or group of workers and implemented by the management during the previous calendar year resulting in improvement in productivity and working conditions such as safety, health and environmental conservation in industrial undertakings due to operation of the "Suggestion Schemes".

1.33 The National Safety Awards (NSA) are given in recognition of safety performance on the part of industrial undertakings and ports to stimulate and maintain the interest of both the management and the workers in accident prevention programme. These awards are given under six schemes for factories and two schemes for ports. Total 73 awards for the year 2001 and 74 awards for the year 2002 were given under the scheme.

LABOUR STATISTICS, RESEARCH, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

LABOUR STATISTICS

1.34 The importance of accurate, timely and detailed statistics and research relating to various aspects of labour activities for taking policy decisions need not be over-emphasized. The Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers which determines the dearness allowance of workers, government employees etc. is presently being compiled with a two-decade old base 1982. To update the base year, main survey for collection of income and expenditure data from all the 78 selected centers, tabulation of data has been completed and fieldwork for Repeat House Rent Survey is in progress. The new series is expected to be available by mid 2004.

1.35 Labour Bureau's Website <http://www.labourbureau.nic.in> and Software system has been developed and is being updated regularly. A central training programme on Labour Statistics is being organized every year.

RESEARCH & TRAINING

1.36 V.V. Giri National Labour Institute completed 13 research projects in the areas of labour market, employment & regulations, agrarian relations & rural labour, integrated labour history, child labour and prevention of HIV/AIDS in the work place. As many as 32 projects are under various stages of progress. The Institute also organised 95 training programmes covering 2523 participants. Besides 3 regular publications, the Institute also brought out occasional publications on research studies. One international training programmes under International Technology and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) / Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan (SCAAP) programmes are also being organised during the current year.

EDUCATION

1.37 The Central Board for Workers Education has conducted 8538 programmes and trained 265106 participants during April, 2003 to February, 2004 at national, regional and unit level on various topics ranging from personality development, industrial health, safety & environment to industrial relations, trade unionism and labour welfare development. Special programmes / seminars were also held for unorganized and rural workers, child labour, women and SC/ST workers.

TENTH PLAN OUTLAY

1.38 The Ministry has drawn an ambitious plan for the welfare and development of Labour during the Tenth Plan. Special emphasis would be laid for elimination of child labour, welfare of unorganised sector workers, skill upgradation and strengthening of labour statistics & research.

1.39 Earlier a zero-based budgeting exercise was carried out during 2001-2002. As an outcome of this exercise, the number of on-going plan schemes were reduced from 142 to 101 during 2001-2002. The number after rationalization is around 94 in 2003-2004 and 73 during 2004 - 2005 including those schemes, which were earlier, proposed for transfer from Plan to Non-plan. The total outlay of the Ministry during the 10th Plan has been placed at Rs.1500 crore, which is 90% higher, compared to Rs.792 crore in the 9th Plan. Rs.181 crore has been earmarked for the Ministry of Labour during 2004-05 as against Rs.170 crores during 2003-04.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

1.40 The 91st Session of the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was held at Geneva from 3-19 June, 2003. An Indian Tripartite Delegation to the International Labour Conference consisting of Government officials, Representatives of Workers and Employers led by Union Labour Minister, Dr. Sahib Singh, accompanied by the then Minister of State for Labour, Shri Santosh Gangwar, attended and participated in the Conference.

1.41 The discussions in the Plenary Sessions as well as in the Technical Committees centered around various issues like Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Revision of the Human Resources Development Recommendations, 1975 (No.150), Scope of the Employment Relationship, Standards-Related Activities in the Area of Occupational Safety and Health and Improved Security of Seafarers' Identification.

1.42 The Ministry of Labour suggested for setting up of an International Skill Development Fund under the umbrella of the ILO as an essential element of the strategy to eliminate poverty so as to help poor countries to venture into large-scale skills training activities and improve their competitiveness. The Global Report of the year was on the subject 'Time for Equality at Work'. While pointing out the work place being an entry point to eliminate discrimination and a strong co-relation between poverty and discrimination, India asserted the importance to adopt a viable poverty reduction strategy to attach the vicious circle of poverty and the multiple facets of discrimination. It was also stressed that there was need for free movement of labour across national boundaries and reiterated that the ILO must press for greater liberalization of such a movement as an essential component of globalization and market access in the area of services.

1.43 India took over from the Republic of Korea, the Coordinatorship of the Asia-Pacific Group .Its main agenda was to nominate unanimously a government delegate of a country for Chairmanship of the Governing Body (June, 2003-June, 2004) and a consensus was reached in favour of Republic of Korea after concerted efforts made by Dr. P.D. Shenoy, Union Labour Secretary as a Coordinator of this Group. The 287th Session of the Governing Body of the ILO was also held for one-day on 20.06.2003 immediately after the close of the Conference. His Excellency, Mr. Eui-Yong Chug, Ambassador of Republic of Korea was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the ILO for the year 2003 to June, 2004.

1.44 The 288th Session of the Governing Body was held from 6-21 November, 2003.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

1.45 Liberalization and globalization have changed the economic scenario and demand in the labour market. The high quality skilled workforce has gained prominence as there is greater emphasis on increase in productivity, which has a direct bearing on the skill available with the labour force. Investment in skill development and training by all the stakeholders and modernization of training system are important so as to equip the labour force with employable skill.

1.46 The Government has accorded high priority to the creation of a skilled labour force as well as skill upgradation in the country to avail the advantages of globalization. Accordingly, 9 obsolete trades were deleted, 43 new trades introduced and curriculum of 42 trades revised in the Craftsman's Training.

1.47 By way of low cost solution to improve the functioning of DGE&T during 2003-04, the intake capacity of trainees increased from the targeted level of 13530 to 16949, which represents an increase of 25.24%. Further, a target of training 21984, 23678 and 27060 trainees has been fixed for the years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 respectively which would result in doubling the capacity in four years without creating any infrastructure or new posts. The expansion has been possible by starting additional short-term courses, running classes on Saturdays, engaging some guest facilities etc.

1.48 The thrust of these initiatives is to make available the skilled workforce to meet the target of ten crore new employment opportunities during the next ten years. These employment opportunities would help in increasing the productivity as well as income level of the working population.

1.49 The Employment Services to unemployed youth of the country is provided through 943 Employment Exchanges (including 42 Special Employment Exchanges for Handicapped), 17 Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for handicapped and 22 coaching-cum-Guidance Centres for Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes. Besides sponsoring the candidates for considering their selection against the vacancies notified, the other important role played by the Employment Exchanges is to motivate and guide the youth for self-employment.

MISCELLANEOUS

- During the month of August, 2003 **“VAN MAHOTSAVA PAKHWADA”** was celebrated. Mass planting of tree sapling in the compounds of the building of the Ministry of Labour and those owned by the offices under the administrative control of the Ministry of Labour was undertaken . The reports from different regions have been received that Van Mahotsava Pakhwada was celebrated with great enthusiasm and a good number of plants were planted. The celebration of the occasion also found place in print media throughout the country.
- September, 2003 was observed as “Hindi Month” to promote the use of Hindi in the Ministry. On this occasion, competition and debates were conducted and awards were given to number of participants.
- With a view to create awareness of “Yoga” among the Employees in the Ministry, a noble programme to provide Yoga Training to the employees of the Ministry of Labour was introduced w.e.f. 29.10.2003. A trained guide from Maharishi Bhagwati Yoga Dhyan Kendra Noida, Ghaziabad provides techequines of Yoga and other related matters to the employees between 1.00 P.M. to 2.00 P.M. As per response received from the beneficiaries, the noble scheme is very helpful to refresh and boost the inner energy of the individuals.

Industrial Relations

There was improvement in the industrial Relations Scenario during the year 2002. The total number of strikes and lockouts declined by 20.7% and 6% respectively in 2002, while workers affected due to these disturbances increased by 56.8%. However, in 2003 (January-September), the number of strikes and lockouts has recorded a substantial increase of 46.8% respectively in comparison to the same period of last year.

1.5 The spatial / industry-wise dispersion of the number of strikes and lockouts and the workers involved / affected as a result of this is not uniform. Among States, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat were the most affected. Among the industry groups, textiles, engineering, chemicals and coal mining recorded the maximum number of strikes and lockouts.

1.6 Man-days lost is a direct measure of the impact of industrial unrest. At the aggregate level, man-days lost due to strikes and lockouts increased by 11.82% in 2002 as compared to the previous period. During 2003 (upto September), the mandays lost due to strikes and lockouts were 21.67 million. Of this, lockouts accounted for 90% of the total mandays lost.

1.7 With a view to strengthen the existing adjudicating system, five new Central Government Industrial Tribunal-cum-Labour Courts have been set up in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Ernakulam, Guwahati and Chandigarh. This Ministry has also introduced a system of Lok-Adalats as an alternative dispute redressal mechanism in the adjudication system of the CGIT-cum-Labour Courts to redress the problem of the pendency of industrial disputes. So far 22 Lok Adalats were held and 271 cases settled therein.