

# Rajya Sabha passes Bill to amend labour laws

Though all political parties except the BJP spoke against it, Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill to amend the Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by certain Establishments) Act, 1988, powered by the Congress's inability to vote against a Bill that it had itself mooted. The Bill exempts establishments employing upto 40 workers from filing returns and maintaining registers. Currently the ceiling is 19 workers.

The Bill was passed in the Upper House even as CPI, CPI(M) and JD(U) members staged a walkout. The amendment that the Left had moved was rejected through division. Opposing the Bill, Left members including D Raja and Tapan Sen — who is also CITU general secretary — insisted that the government not expand the definition of “small establishments” as those which employ upto 40 workers for being eligible for exemption of filing of returns and maintenance of registers. Instead, they sought upper limit of workers to be kept at 14 in an establishment as better technology had already meant factories cutting down on manpower.

Initiating the discussion, Congress's Madhusudan Mistry expressed concern over the implications of the amendments on workers, especially casual workers and migrant labourers. BJP's Baswaraj Patil said the proposed legislation is in the interest of all employees and welcomed it. Trinamool's D Bandopadhyay said that the law is “draconian”.

Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said, “There is some kind of misinformation about the