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RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LAW, PUNJAB

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ARTICLES

Portugal: The country that made it illegal for bosses to call employees after work

Work from home has helped save commute time but it has also brought in extended working hours, calls from bosses after office hours, and more fatigue. To beat the diminishing work-life balance, Portugal wants to make it illegal for bosses to call their employees outside of their official hours. The legislation was conceived by Portugal's ruling Socialist party to improve work-life balance for the country's remote workforce, which expanded due to Covid-19, and to make Portugal a more attractive base for international 'digital nomads' – people who travel while telecommuting.

According to the Parliament of Portugal, the new labour laws will ensure a healthier work-life balance for employees. It forbids employers from monitoring employees who are working from home. The rules are applicable to organisations with more than 10 workers. Also, the companies will contribute to expenses including electricity and Internet, which employees have incurred due to the shift to remote working during the pandemic. These costs can be written off as business expenses by the employers.

Ana Mendes Godinho, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Portugal said, "We consider Portugal one of the best places in the world for these digital nomads and remote workers to choose to live in, we want to attract them to Portugal" while attending the recent Web Summit conference in Lisbon. He also suggested that the country hopes that this will attract people from other countries to find employment in the country, especially during the pandemic years.

It is important to note here that Portugal isn't the only country modernizing its labour laws; citizens of France, Spain, Belgium, Slovakia, Italy, the Philippines, Argentina, India, and more, all currently enjoy 'the right to disconnect' – or abstain without punishment from working and communicating with their employers during designated rest periods.

China: The hands behind your Vogue

Shein, a Chinese fast-fashion giant, has been marred with conspiracies and public outrage for its detrimental environmental policies, and violations of laws. A recent addition to the tally is a report released by Swiss watchdog 'Public Eye', implicating the company of adopting anti-labour-welfare policies. The watchdog reported that the company is making its labour to work for 75-hours a week in Guangzhou metropolis, which goes against the Chinese labour code, and as well as Shein's supplier code of conduct, which envisages a maximum of 40-hours work a week. Though overwork in textile industries is not a new practice, excessive overtime without any premium, contract, or insurance, goes against the well-settled standard of international labour laws. The report also noted, "The employees are paid per item; there is neither a basic wage nor an overtime premium; they work 11 hours a day and have one or two free days a month." This probe was the result of surveys conducted in 17 factories in Guangzhou and reported that labours and workers work for more than 12-hours a day in the warehouses, for 23-25 days a month. The report concluded that Shein systematically took advantage of labourers who were in dire need of money and had low expectations.



Bangladesh: Can another Rana Palace be prevented?

When it comes to protecting the basic human rights at the cost of the economic development, the developing nations usually show an aversion in framing and implementing safeguards which can jeopardise their finances. One such case is of the exploitation of the labourers working in sweatshops in the Asian nations. Sweatshops refers to an industrial or manufacturing industry with poor working condition and minimum procedural safeguards. The gravity of this issue is so high that the workers across 5000 sweatshops in Bangladesh are earning approximately \$2 every day. After the Rana Factory Fire which killed more than 1100 people in 2013, the International Labour Organization. The Accord was legally binding on the nation and has been successful enough to eliminate the occurrence of any disaster of such scale thereafter. IT required 2000 international clothing companies to pay for the audit and inspection of the local cloth manufacturers of the nation and also provided for blacklisting the latter.

The Accord was replaced by a new agreement named International Accord for Health and Safety in Textile and Garment Industry, which was signed in August. The agreement has reiterated several provisions of the 2013 Accord. It has also enshrined a commitment to expand the agreement to one more nation apart from Bangladesh. It could be thereby apprehended that India can also witness such a framework. However, as a drawback to the pro labourer organisations, the number of signatories has fallen from 200 to 163. Famous companies such as Walmart have refused to sign the same due to stricter provisions and legal obligation on the retailers. The need of the hour is a coherent and strict framework on an international level which can protect the workers in the third world nations without jeopardising their trade.

RECENT EVENTS

CASLW conducts national workshop on Right to Information

Centre for Advanced Studies in Labour Welfare (CASLW), Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL) organised a week-long workshop on Right to Information which took place from 6th to 12th October, 2021. It was a two-hour event daily, spanning over a period of seven days. The RTI Workshop was attended by more than 190 participants which not only included Students and faculty members but also government officials who have been doing the ground work in the field of RTI. The workshop was addressed by luminaries from the field of academics, renowned lawyers and state officials. Some of the most appealing topics were taken up by the speakers which hold great importance in the modern-day use of the RTI. These included discussions on freedom of speech, privacy issues, transparency and right to health; all this in consonance with Right to Information. The workshop was made a success by the attendees who actively participated in the discussions by sharing their views and asking questions, which were brilliantly answered by the speakers. The event contributed immensely towards the understanding and working of the Right to Information and every participant was benefitted with great deal of knowledge.



INTERESTING INSIGHTS

AUSTRIA

After working for 6 months, every employee is entitled to an annual paid vacation amounting to 30 working days

UAE

An initiative called the 'reading break' allows employees to catch up with their reading during working hours



BELGIUM

Leaving your job to travel the world is an employee's right. Known as 'career breaks', it allows employees to take off, perhaps even for a year.

JAPAN

While napping at work will earn you a tag of being inefficient in other parts of the world, Japanese believe it to be a sign of hard work.



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