Debate on 70 Hour Work Week

Why in news?

Recently Infosys founder N.R. Narayana Murthy sparked a debate, urging young Indians to work 70 hours per week.

Status of Working Hours in India
• As per *Time Use Survey 2019*, urban Indians aged 15-29, work 8.5 hours a day on average, with Uttarakhand ranking first at 9.6 hours a day. Rural Indians work 7.2 hours a day on average. • **Factories Act 1948**- Every adult (a person who has completed 18 years of age) cannot work for more than 48 hours a week and not more than 9 hours in a day. • Any employee who works for more than this period is eligible for overtime remuneration prescribed as twice the amount of ordinary wages. • **Mines Act 1952-** No person in a mine is required to work for more than 10 hours in any day, inclusive of overtime. • **Minimum Wages Act 1948-** Wages paid for overtime must be double the actual rate for any hour, or part of an hour, of actual work undertaken in excess of the prescribed 9 hours or 48 hours per week. • **New labour code-** Weekly and daily working hours are capped at 48 hours and 12 hours, respectively. • **State's Shops and Establishment Act** - Every State in India has its own overtime rules and policy set out in this Act.

What are the arguments in favour of 70 hour work week?

- **Economic productivity-** A long work week boost economic productivity, leads to employment opportunities and overall economic growth.
- **Worker efficiency-** It will increase the productivity and efficiency of the Indian workforce, which is currently one of the lowest in the world.
- This would meet market demands, generate profit in a competitive global market.
- **Developed country**- It is necessary for India to become a developed country and uplift the living standards of its people.
- **Skill acquisition**- It will enable young Indians to learn new skills, acquire more knowledge, and innovate more solutions for the country's problems.
- **Success stories**- It will help India emulate the success stories of Japan and Germany, which worked hard and long hours to rebuild their nations after the Second World War.

What are the arguments against the 70 hour work week?

- **One size does not fit all-** 89% of the Indian workforce is engaged in informal

employment, compared to just 4.2% in Germany and 8% in Japan.

- Hence comparing these countries with India in labour productivity in not viable.
- **Exploitation-** A prolonged work week can lead to the exploitation of the working class and deprives their rights and benefits.
- **Health impacts -** It can negatively impact *mental and physical health*, resulting in stress, burnout, fatigue, sleep deprivation and other health problems.
- **Work-life balance**- As per ILO, companies that implement work-life balance policies benefit from increased retention of current employees, improved recruitment, lower rates of absenteeism and higher productivity.
- **Counterproductive**- It can reduce quality and efficiency of the work output, increase the chances of errors and accidents, lowers the morale and motivation of the workers.
- **Economic inequality**- Rich benefit from long work hours of working class which may widen the inequality between working class and rich.
- **Productivity-** Productivity is an attribute of skill, not time, and that reducing working hours can improve leisure and quality of life without reducing output value.
- Working more than eight hours a day also leads to *lower hourly output*.
    - ***Belgium*** has given the workers the right to work four days a week without a salary reduction to create a more dynamic and productive economy.
- **Outdated**- 70 hour work week is outdated as it does not suit the changing needs and preferences of the modern workforce, which values flexibility, autonomy and work-life balance.
- **Lacks funding**- Worker productivity depends on the amount of capital and the quality of institutions that support investment and innovation, hence just increasing working hours will have no impact on productivity.
- **Labour productivity**- India's average annual working hours stayed above 2,000 from 1970 to 2020, while the labour productivity increased marginally from 2 dollars per hour to 9 dollars in the same period.
- Hence the need of the hour is to increase productivity through technology rather increasing working hours.

References

1. The Hindu- Understanding worker productivity
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3. The Hindu- 70 hour work week idea into perspective

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