

Thousands protest Abe's plan to eliminate overtime pay



←Thousands of workers rally in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on May 27 to protest the government plan to cut overtime wages to zero.

- 1) Thousands of people joined demonstrations across Japan on May 27 to protest the Abe administration's plan for a new labor system that would allow companies to force employees to work overtime for free.
- 2) For the first time, Rengo, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, held simultaneous rallies in all 47 prefectures to oppose the government's proposal. An estimated 22,000 people took part in the protests, including 3,800 workers who rallied in Tokyo's Hibiya

district.

- 3) "The government is considering changing worker protection rules from the viewpoint of corporations," Rengo President Nobuaki Koga said. "The new labor time system is an ultimate overtime wage nonpayment system."
- 4) As part of his economic growth strategy, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to ease labor regulations to allow companies to pay fixed amounts to "professional" personnel and other special workers, regardless of their working hours.
- 5) The labor ministry had taken a cautious stance toward the idea, but it recently decided to go along with the Abe administration's plan, according to sources.
- 6) The ministry is expected to propose the new labor system at a meeting of the Industrial Competitiveness Council, chaired by Abe, on May 28. That means the zero overtime rate system will be included in the prime minister's new economic strategy to be compiled in late June.
- 7) According to the labor ministry's proposal, "world-class highly specialized professionals," such as foreign exchange dealers and fund managers, will be subject to the new system. But specific details of the system have yet to be decided.
- 8) Yasuchika Hasegawa, a member of the Industrial Competitiveness Council, is also expected to propose a similar zero overtime pay system at the May 28 meeting to cover a wider range of employees than those mentioned in the labor ministry's plan.
- 9) Under the existing system, companies must provide overtime payments for employees who work more than eight hours a day.

But the new system will allow corporations to decide employees' wages based on their performance in lieu of working hours. They will also not need to pay extra for work on holidays or late-night shifts.

- 10) During Abe's first run as prime minister, his administration attempted to introduce a similar work system. But it abandoned the plan after facing public criticism that cutting overtime payments could lead to a higher incidence of "karoshi," or death from overwork. 【May 28, 2014/THE ASAHI SHIMBUN】 ※in lieu of: ~の代わりに

☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆

1. What do you think are the reasons behind the proposal for free overtime work?
2. What is the economic growth strategy proposed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe?
3. Do you know any other specific programs of economic growth strategies? Please explain some of them.
4. What is "karoshi"? Please cite an instance of "karoshi" that you have heard or read the news.
5. Have you ever worked overtime for free?
Would you be willing to work overtime for free in your current company?
6. Please explain the picture. What is the importance/role of a mascot in any campaign?
7. Make sentences using the following words: disqualification: overtime, eliminate, simultaneous, viewpoint, ultimate, competitiveness, strategy, in lieu of, existing and professional.

NEWS de TALK by PHILOS

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