Japan attempts to ease working hours

Harder   5th March 2017

Japan's government has backed an initiative to ease the pressure on Japanese workers and simultaneously boost consumer spending. The new measure is called "Premium Friday". A spokesperson from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said the campaign would encourage workers to leave work earlier on the last Friday of each month to relax and/or go shopping. Around 130 companies across Japan have signed up to participate in the initiative, including many major employers. Skeptics are unsure whether the scheme will succeed or not because of the infamous workaholic nature of Japanese workers. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters: "It will take time for

Premium Friday to take root." The idea for Premium Friday was partly prompted by the suicide of an employee who was continually required to work excessive overtime at the ad agency Dentsu. A court ruled the suicide was "death by overwork" and

stressed the need to address what is a common problem in Japan - overworking. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is leading by example. He promoted the campaign by leaving the office early for a

meditation session at a Tokyo temple at 3:30 p.m. Mr Suga said it was essential for both the government and the private sector to create an atmosphere where workers feel comfortable in leaving early. However, many workers said they would just have to work on Saturdays instead to finish their work.

Sources: JapanTimes.co.jp / reuters.com / JapanToday.com

1. How much overtime is too much?
2. Do employers have too much power over employees?
3. How much of a problem is overworking in your country?
4. What do you think of Shinzo Abe for leading by example?
5. What would you do with a Friday afternoon off?
6. Would you feel comfortable leaving work early?

Workers' Stress

Rank these with your teacher.

Put the biggest workers' stresses at the top.

- boredom
- meetings
- no promotion
- customers

- overtime
- boss
- colleagues
- deadlines