

# Rajasthan govt withdraws order increasing daily working limit to 12 hours

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- **Congress-ruled Rajasthan was the first state to increase the working hour limit to 12 hours from 8 hours through an order issued on April 11.**
- **At least 10 states in India have increased the working hours in India from 8 to 12 hours with some States not even requiring overtime wages for the extra four hours of work.**

The Rajasthan government has withdrawn an order issued last month to temporarily increase the daily working period in manufacturing units from 8 to 12 hours. Rajasthan has become the second state to withdraw such an order, after Uttar Pradesh.

"The shortage of workers is no longer a concern with the revised lockdown guidelines by the Central government. Companies are no longer bound to cap workers in factories and many units have opened up in Rajasthan. There are no restrictions on the movement of workers, too. Hence, the order has been withdrawn," Rajasthan Principal Secretary (Labour) Niraj Kumar Pawan told Business Standard over phone. The decision was withdrawn on Sunday.

He said the situation was different when the order was first introduced for a period of three months as only limited workers were allowed to work in shifts. "We have withdrawn the notification in about a month," Pawan said.

"We welcome the decision of the Rajasthan government...All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) would urge the other state governments to follow suit and withdraw all the changes being effected during the Covid-19 lockdown period," said AITUC general-secretary Amarjeet Kaur.

Congress-ruled Rajasthan was the first state to increase the working hour limit to 12 hours from 8 hours through an order issued on April 11. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had lauded Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot during a meeting of the CMs on April 27 for the move which was aimed to compensate for the loss of production during the national lockdown. He had urged other States to follow it.

At least 10 states in India have increased the working hours in India from 8 to 12 hours – with some States not even requiring overtime wages for the extra four hours of work. The States that have made the change so far are Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Goa, MP, Uttarakhand, Assam, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This translates into 72 hours a week – much more than the norms prescribed by the International Labour Organisation.

India is a signatory to the ILO's convention of 1919 on working hours. Though all countries which signed it had to reduce working hours to 48 hours a week, India was given an exemption to keep it at 60 hours. So, the move by the State governments in India, which was vehemently opposed by the central labour unions, was in contravention of the ILO convention, too.

The Karnataka government played it safe and recently increased the daily working hour limit to 10 hours (translating into 60 hours a week) to remain within the ILO's norms. Various State governments had used special powers under the Factories Act of 1948 to bring out the change for a period of 3 months. In fact, some States had exercised powers under Section 5 of the Factories Act which can be

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only used in case of a national emergency, war or internal disturbances – a move which has been legally challenged.

On May 15, the Uttar Pradesh government withdrew its order increasing the daily working hour limit to 12 hours. The move came a day after the Allahabad High Court issued a notice to the State on a public interest litigation challenging the legality of the order.