

New labour codes to allow 4-day work week

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Draft rules being finalised, says official.

The new labour codes **set to be implemented soon** would provide companies the flexibility of reducing the number of working days to four days a week and provide free medical check-ups to workers through the Employees State Insurance Corporation, Labour and Employment Secretary Apurva Chandra said on Monday.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Chandra said the draft rules under the labour codes are being finalised. He added that most States were in the process of framing their rules and some, including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, would be ready with their drafts this week.

He said the concerns about the working hours going up from 10.5 hours to 12 hours, with one hour of rest that arose during consultations had been addressed.

“We have tried to make some changes. We have tried to give flexibility in working days,” he said.

Under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 draft rules, the limit of working hours for a week was 48 hours. Mr. Chandra said this limit was “sacrosanct” and that employers and workers would have to agree to a change in working days. “It cannot be forced,” he said.

He added that ESIC would provide free medical check-ups to workers so the employer does not have to bear the costs.

Speaking about the Budget announcements regarding the Ministry, Mr. Chandra said a portal for collecting information on gig, building and construction workers would be started by May or June. This would help in formulating health, housing, food and other schemes for migrant workers.

The Budget had included interest from Provident Fund contributions over ₹2.5 lakh being taxed. Mr. Chandra said 1.23 lakh people out of the 6.5 crore PF contributing accounts would be impacted by this.