



ALL INDIA IT & ITes EMPLOYEES' UNION

Affiliated to CITU • Registration Number : A.L.C./OFFICE- 17/11220

AIITEU Statement Condemning Tech Billionaire Narayan Murthy's proposal of longer working hours

The All India IT Employees Union (AIITEU) strongly condemns Infosys co-founder NR Narayan Murthy and other tech billionaires' statements advocating for a 70-hour work week. Mr. Murthy in a [recent interview](#) said that India's productivity is one of the lowest in the world and needs improvement. **His reductive solution to this issue is that young people should be willing to work 70 hours a week.** Murthy was supported by like-minded tech-preneurs like TV Mohandas Pai and Ola Cabs co-founder Bhavish Aggarwal on social media.

This is not the first time Murthy has made such an egregious suggestion to masquerade his support for exploiting workers in the garb of economy-building. In [2020](#) as IT & ITes workers were being retrenched during the coronavirus pandemic and the unplanned lockdown, Murthy took to the news saying that “...Indians should work for 60 hours a week for next 2-3 yrs to revive economy”. It is interesting to note that these statements never touch upon the topic of commensurate pay. For reference, Infosys freshers' salary has not increased much in the last [24 years](#) (~Rs 3.55 LPA in 1999 to ~ Rs 3.75 LPA in 2023) while inflation has increased by [323.38%](#).

1. More working hours ≠ productivity

Productivity improvement is influenced by three interrelated factors: The pace and extent of technological diffusion in an economy, the quality of human capital, and the efficacy of public investment. India's productivity, as per ILO data, is among the lowest in the world is not because Indians don't work long enough. [The data](#) shows that the average hours clocked per person in a week in India is one of the highest in the world. At 48 hours a week, India's productivity per hour in 2021 was \$8.47, while France's was \$58.5 even though the average French worker clocked only about 30 hours a week.

This inverse relationship between hours worked and productivity has everything to do with the level of technology and human capital. There is [enough research](#) that shows that longer hours of work are generally associated with lower unit labour productivity, while shorter hours of work are linked with higher productivity. Indian IT sector's focus on a service-based economy has mostly served foreign capital to bring big bucks only for their shareholders, and it is done through the exploitation of workers and not through technological innovation or investments to develop human capital.

2. A 70-hour work week is ILLEGAL under existing labour laws of India

Our existing labour laws largely define a workday of 8 hours within a workweek of 48 hours. Moreover, the law also defines overtime pay wherein a worker is entitled to double the wage rate for overtime work above 48 hours a week, with the worker retaining the choice to work overtime. These rights were won by the organized struggles of 20th-century industrial workers worldwide. While the Union Government has tried to change the working day from 8 to 12 hours within a 48-hour work week to favour the capitalist owners – these changes haven't been ratified with the exception of a [few state governments](#).

With increasing automation, there needs to be a constant reduction in working hours to have more creative and leisure time, which in turn improves productivity. The Indian IT sector sprung up in the era of globalisation and in the absence of worker unions. Therefore, IT companies have been consistently violating labour laws by stretching working hours without paying any overtime. With the establishment of IT & ITeS workers' unions in India, precedents have been defined to include IT employees as workmen covered by labour laws, and state governments are also [taking cognisance](#) of such violations. As a reaction, Mr Murthy and his cohort are arguing for higher working hours to evade the overtime laws completely.

3. Longer working hours increase gender disparity and burnout

Traditional gender conventions frequently place many tasks on women, such as housework, parenting and caring for older family members. Balancing these obligations with professional commitments that demand one to work longer can result in severe stress and burnout. A [2022 global survey by Deloitte](#) showed that 48% of women workers in India said they felt burnt out. More women in the younger cohort, in the age group of 18-25, experienced high stress or burnout (63%). Another [2022 study by Slack](#) found that 54% of Indian knowledge workers experience burnout with younger GenZ workers reporting the highest number of burnouts (58%) in a period of 12 months before the study.

4. In the face of increasing automation and unprecedented unemployment, we need to demand shorter working hours

With technological advancement, as seen in the IT & ITeS sector, there has been unprecedented productivity which should also decrease the working hours of workers. In 2023, the historic strike of the United Auto-Workers (UAW) Union in the US demanded the big three auto manufacturers in the US to reduce the 40-hour work week to a 32-hour work week with the same pay, and overtime beyond 32 hours of work which will effectively bring in a [4 day work week for workers](#). The World Federation for Trade Unions (WFTU) and CITU - the central trade union AIITEU is affiliated to have been demanding to slash working hours to 35 hours per week for all workers. In addition to a reduced work week for Indian IT & ITeS employees, AIITEU also demands a formulation of regulations relating to displacement due to automation and working from home, such as the laws to [protect workers from automation-related job losses](#) and a [Right to Disconnect](#) post-work hours.

Mr Murthy's statement is not a naive suggestion, but a well-thought scheme to promote the draconian [labour codes](#), that seek to bring about an onslaught of private capital on workers' livelihoods and lives. We have witnessed the ever-worsening conditions of Indian tech workers, with the passing of the labour codes last year which has given many companies, especially in the tech sector, a free hand with hiring and firing workers. Working hours are regularly increased with no overtime, via third-party contracts that [openly violate](#) existing labour laws of the country.

AIITEU strongly opposes the consistent onslaught on workers' rights by the capitalist classes who are facing a systematic crisis wherein the only way to safeguard profits and wealth is through intensifying the exploitation of their workers. AIITEU asserts that it will continue its fight against the nexus between the capitalist tech billionaires and the anti-worker government who are unwilling to protect employee's rights and lives.

Our demands :

- 1. Defining a 35-hour workweek for IT & ITeS workers, over which the overtime policy should be applied for all workers in the sector.**
- 2. Implementation of a Right to Disconnect policy for remote tech workers, to stop post working hour communications.**
- 3. State government inspection of workplaces in order to verify compliance with the existing labour laws as well as the Maternity Benefits Act update from 2017.**

We also urge tech workers to join the union and organise to improve working conditions in the technology sector in India and to build a better future for the industry.



Saubhik Bhattacharya,
General Secretary,
All India IT & ITeS Employees Union (AIITEU)
Contact: +91 98300 90202