

Tokyo -

A recent television special said it all: it showed a building in downtown Tokyo pre-programmed office with lights that uniformly shutoff at 10 p m; seconds later, virtually every light in the building came right back on. Despite such displays, the nation that has taken the sting out of the words 'workaholic', producing 10 percent of the world's exports with just 2 percent of its population, is suddenly obsessed with a deadly phenomenon known as *karoshi*. That's the Japanese word for '*death from overwork*'. Tetsuinojo Umeta, the medical authority who coined the word, defines *karoshi* as a 'condition in which psychologically unsound work processes are allowed to continue in a way that disrupts the worker's normal work and life rhythms, leading to a buildup of fatigue in the body and a chronic condition of overwork accompanied by a worsening of pre-existent high blood pressure and a hardening of the arteries and finally resulting in a fatal breakdown'. Translation: all work and no play can really wreck one's health, even in Japan. Hardly a week goes by without a grim report about some overzealous worker in the prime of his life who could not just say no to overtime. Not long ago, 39-year-old police sergeant, Hartuo Okada, captured headlines as a *karoshi* victim by working double shifts for a month during the enthronement ceremonies for the nation's new monarch. There are no reliable figures on the number of victims, but analysts believe that tens of thousands of Japanese become seriously ill or die from overwork each year. Despite promises by the government to trim working hours, the average Japanese clocked 2,150 hours in 1989, compared with 1,924 hours for Americans and 1,643 hours for the French. Some Japanese want to change. When a group of lawyers and doctors set up the nation's first *karoshi* hot line in 1988, 135 people phoned in, on the first day. Since then, nearly 2,000 cases have been reported to the 42 hot lines across the nation, and an international call-in center has been set recently. To raise public awareness about the problem and to pressure the government and, corporate Japan into action, a group of lawyers, doctors and victims' wives has published a book called *Karoshi : when the Corporate Warrior Dies*, which recounts numerous horror stories. Yet the government and most Japanese companies rarely acknowledges *karoshi* and provide no special compensation to survivors. As the Ministry of Labour defines it, overwork can only be considered a cause of death if the victim 'worked continuously for 24 hours preceding death', or worked 16 hours a day for seven consecutive days leading up to death'. Alas, the recent media attention probably won't slow down the production lines much. In a poll conducted by an insurance company, more than 40 percent of the employees the firm covered said they feared that overwork might kill them; few planned to do anything about it. All in all, it looks like another busy year for the folks at the *karoshi* hot line ***The Telegraph***.

Read the text in more detail and decide if the following statements are true or false?

- 1) Japan has a relatively small population, but is a major world exporter.
- 2) The Ministry of Labour knows the exact number of *karoshi* victims.
- 3) People can call special telephone numbers to report cases of death from overwork.
- 4) A book has been written to inform the public about the *karoshi* problem, and to make the government and companies react.
- 5) The Japanese government and many companies usually admit that there is a problem with overwork.
- 6) Many of the employees recently questioned by an insurance company said that they are trying to change their working habits.

TRUE	FALSE

correct the false ones :

Replace the words and phrases in italics with the following words from the text.

authority headline figures production
 overtime shifts compensation poll

- 1) John received *payment* from his company after injuring himself at work.
- 2) The factory has *two periods of working time*: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 4 p.m. to midnight.
- 3) Tom Peters is a world famous *expert* on management problems.
- 4) The *title* on the front page of today's newspaper is "Priceless painting stolen from Washington museum".
- 5) We have just received the sales *statistics* for the Far East.
- 6) I'm going to have to put in a lot of *extra hours* this week.
- 7) By modernizing its factories, the firm hopes to increase its *output*.
- 8) We carried out a *survey of public opinion* to find out what young consumers thought about the two different brands of soft drink.