

Employees in BPOs unite for better deal

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Employees in the BPO sector are setting aside October 7 as the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW).

"When we have a day for love and friendship, it is important to observe a day that emphasises our work condition," said Kartik Shekar, general secretary, UNITES, the BPO workers' union. "We would like to leverage the occasion to create awareness about unionism among BPO employees."

A really full day

The special day, an idea of the International Trade Union Confederation and the Global Progressive Forum, will be observed with a series of programmes. And all of October will be observed as Call Centre Action Month.

Shekar said job stability and security were the main issues, against the backdrop of the economic meltdown.

"Precarious work and employment security is what customer service professionals face globally," he said. "Customer service centres have a lot of young workers with atypical employment contract arrangements and they work outside traditional boundaries."

Employees often work long and unregulated hours in jobs that could be monotonous and lacked promotion opportunities.

Collective action was needed as it was difficult for individuals in call centres to demand their rights, Shekar said.

Nasscom president Som Mittal said the association would support the initiative and he had entrusted vice-president Raju Bhatnagar, in-charge of the BPO segment, to co-ordinate with UNITES.

Raju Bhatnagar told MID DAY: "It is a welcome move and will lift employees' morale."

On unionism in the BPO sector, he said. "If we respect the Constitution, we cannot say no to unionism and collective bargain."

They will observe World Day for Decent Work (WDDW), on Oct 7

Unaware

However, few employees know about WDDW.

"I had heard of some even in October but I am not sure what it is," said Ashit Padhi employee, Tata Consultancy Services.

"I am happy that the fraternity is coming together to be heard," he added.

"The company is not averse to the idea of employees coming together. In fact, a collaborated effort is needed to resolve issues involving employers and employees," said Prathiksha, HR manager in a leading BPO.

What's decent work?

According to UNITES:

- **Rights at work:** Enjoying core labour rights such as freedom from forced labour, discrimination and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- **Social and economic justice:** Dignified wages, which allow workers to meet basic needs and to participate fully in the society in which they live.

UNITES will provide members and non-members with detailed information and organise an exchange of information on:

- Decent work
- Collective bargaining
- Health and safety
- Big turnover of workers
- Implications of trade union rights
- Poor working environment and equipment