

Trade unions favour unionising BPO sector

'Local firms and MNCs in country bound by Indian labour laws'

Special Correspondent

BANGALORE: Major trade unions with a nationwide presence have urged employees in the business process outsourcing/ call centre sector to be unionised. Though trade unions want the employees to assert their right to form unions, managements have so far been against it.

They say it might affect the efficiency of the 3.5-lakh personnel, predominantly women.

In Bangalore, with a BPO/call centre workforce estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000, their interests have so far been protected by the Union for Information Technology Enabled Services in India.

Independent

According to its secretary-general, R. Karthik Shekhar, it functioned independently. It

had close to 6,000 members across the country.

All-India Trade Union Congress vice-president H.V. Ananthasubba Rao felt that local and multinational companies operating in India were bound by Indian labour laws which provided the employees the right to organise themselves for collective bargaining.

The recent sexual assault and murder of a woman call centre employee in Bangalore would encourage BPO employees to organise themselves and the central trade unions would support the move.

The AITUC leader said he had asked the Union Government to form a tripartite committee at the national level with the BPO managements, employees and the Government represented on it, to look into the problems of the employees and work out

ways to provide them safe working conditions.

The AITUC was also trying to get a delegation of Members of Parliament to visit the IT and BPO firms in various cities to see the working conditions and make suitable recommendations to the Government, he said.

Secretary of the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) W.R. Varadarajan said the BPO/call centre sector could not be an exception to the right of workers to form unions.

"CITU has received complaints from BPO employees about the hire-and-fire policy of managements, certain arbitrary steps taken by them to reduce attrition, shift timings and even instances of sexual harassment," he said. Some of these complaints were forwarded to the Union Labour Ministry.