

Security primer for BPOs

B'lore firms told to get act together

B.R. Srikanth
Bangalore, December 20

THE WAKE-up call has 10 commandments. The new BPO security manual reads like a Bible, but makes sense. The Bangalore city police handed out a list of dos and don'ts on the security of 150,000 employees of the ITES-BPO firms on Tuesday.

The companies were asked to implement forthwith security measures for their staff — women in particular.

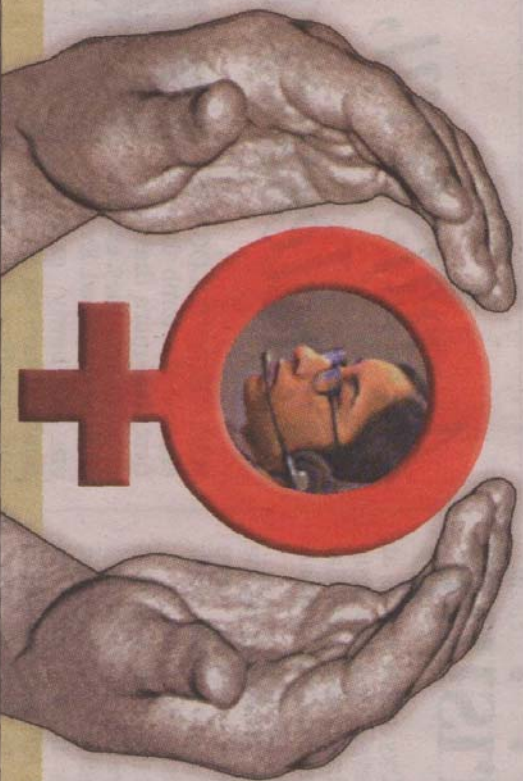
The measures were hammered out at a meeting held after the rape and the murder of Prathiba Srikanta Murthy, a call centre employee, here last week. City police commissioner Dr Ajai Kumar objected to the ad hoc security and duty drop system followed by a majority of the ITES-BPO companies here. He faulted the system of frequent rotation of drivers and the practice of giving cell phone numbers of employees to drivers.

Dr Singh told the firms: "We will ask the government to issue a notification on making security measures for IT firms compulsory, but we advise you to do it immediately."

FOR SAFETY'S SAKE

Belated, but relevant. The new security handbook for the BPO industry focusses on the duty drop system and the drivers to be hired

- 1 Women should not be picked up first or dropped last by company vehicles at night
- 2 If male colleagues are not around, women workers must have security escorts
- 3 Vehicles ferrying women should be equipped with GPS (global positioning system).
- 4 Companies should submit data-base of taxi service operators and drivers on duty to the police.
- 5 Cab drivers ferrying women should not be changed frequently.
- 6 The ITES-BPOs must ensure that transport operators employ drivers with police verification certificates.
- 7 The firms should draw up route maps and schedules of drivers every Monday.
- 8 Car pools hired by firms to work should not have tinted windscreens.
- 9 Senior security officials of every firm should check vehicles and frisk drivers for weapons.
- 10 These firms should not assign work for 14-16 hours to drivers as is the norm



A global trade union?

B.R. Srikanth
Bangalore, December 20

THE IT industry might have shot down the idea of trade unions in the BPO sector but the cry for change is getting louder. And in a globalised economy, Indian call centre employees have the option of becoming part of a global union—a demand increasingly finding acceptance here.

A global agreement between a multinational company and Union Network International (UNI), a Geneva-based organisation of 900 unions worldwide, can give more say to employees in the country on the adoption of best practices in human resources. The agreement is a commitment to observe international standards, recognise the right to join a trade union and bargain collectively.

UNI's affiliate in India, UNITEES, has employees of ICICI One Source, HSBC, Accenture and Trans Works as its members. "We are knocking on the doors of ITES-BPO companies, but we have not got a response so far," says Karthik Shekhar, general secretary of UNITEES. Dr Kiran Karnik, president of NASSCOM, declined to comment on the charter as he had not read the document in detail.