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India News

Dial CITU for misbehaving bosses in Bengal IT

Nov 15, 2006, 8:45 GMT

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Kolkata, Nov 15 (IANS) Is your manager misbehaving? Is your boss over friendly? Are you facing harassment at the workplace? Are you a victim of over surveillance? If yes, then the Centre for Indian Trade Union (CITU) could help.

A man barking over the phone at an employee like in Bollywood movies, an unwelcome male colleague clasp the neck of a

woman from behind and a caricature of the Uncle Sam - representative of the outsourcing industry - keeping surveillance on a beleaguered man.

These are the banners on the orange (not red) coloured [www.wbitsa.org](#), the website of West Bengal Information Technology Services Association (WBITSA), the nascent IT sector union of Centre for Indian Trade Union (CITU).

Nothing was more ironical when Information Technology (IT) was used as a powerful tool to unionise the IT sector as the site was launched Tuesday by CPI-M's enfant terrible and the chief minister's bugbear Subhas Chakraborty.

The local MLA and state youth and transport minister unveiled the website before a thousand-strong crowd which hardly comprised the suave IT sector employees. The IT hub in Salt Lake's Sector V falls under Chakraborty's assembly constituency.

The natty IT folks walked past the function but did not join the 'movement' yet.

But with the launch, Bengal IT does have the one and only avuncular Buddhadeb Bhattacharya now to protect them.

Much to perhaps the reformist Bhattacharya's suppressed displeasure, WBITSA would now position itself to be the new agony uncle of the 24X7 industry.

Trust CITU or WBITSA to protect you in the mean cubicles of IT firms. A visit to the website [www.wbitsa.org](#) can make things clear where one can fill up a form and lodge a complaint against the employer.

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'A few of the companies are reluctant to adhere to the prescribed norms as defined in the relevant clauses of industrial relations as well as rules related to shops and establishments act,' CITU State President Shymal Chakraborty told IANS.

Said a WBITSA functionary: 'The government of West Bengal has declared this sector as essential service by relaxing the restrictions on fixed weekly holidays and all units of this sector can go for 24x7 working hours provided they ensure conformity to the 48-hours weekly working.'

According to WBITSA, women are the most vulnerable section of the workforce in the IT sector.

'Women employees working in night shifts require additional protection and security. They also require sufficient conveyance. In some cases it has been seen that adequate arrangements are wanting at odd hours,' says the website.

Said WBITSA Secretary Somnath Bhattacharya: 'We are aware of the realities of this sensitive sector. Not only are we urging the employees to join us, we are also seeking support of the entrepreneurs for the growth of the sector and the welfare of the people involved in the industry.'

Added Shyamal Chakraborty: 'Formation of unions does not necessarily imply strikes. But we have got complaints from the employees about the wrong treatment meted out to them in this sector besides retrenchment without notice.'

He said the website had already evoked a positive response with as many as 31 employees of IT companies expressing keen interest in WBITSA as of Wednesday morning.

According to WBITSA, the organisation would fight for issuance of formal appointment letters with well-defined terms and conditions of service to employees, 48-hours weekly work schedule and other statutory amenities.

Senior officials from over 100 IT companies, including Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Cognizant and Globsyn, earlier attended a meeting to chalk out counter strategies against formation of unions.

However, the Dec 14 general strike called by the left trade unions against the 'anti-labour' policies of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the centre would be a test for the fledgling IT union's strength.

Meanwhile, a debate rages in the CPI-M on whether IT should be treated as essential services.

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