IT-BPO employees of STPI units can work from home

ET Bureau | Last Updated: Mar 13, 2020, 09.16 PM IST

NEW DELHI: Employees at leading IT-BPO companies operating have been given a go-ahead to work from home, according to a notification by the Department of Telecom and the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI).

This was a key demand of the IT-BPO industry following the Covid-19 virus pandemic.

Industry association Nasscom has been in talks with the government for more than a week to allow employees of units operating from Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to work from home. In a notification on Friday, Department of Telecom has taken a decision to allow employees operating from SEZs to work from home till April 30, 2020. The STPI notification was issued on Thursday and is likely to benefit close to 2 million employees across 3000 units.

Companies will have to inform the STPI and DoT before asking employees to shift the necessary infrastructure out of office, such as laptops, to operate from home.

"Three years back, we incorporated a provision in the foreign trade policy to allow work from home. And since the provision was already there, we issued a blanket approval yesterday to implement the policy, given the current circumstances," STPI Director General Omkar Rai told ET.

The waiver is likely to benefit employees of BPO companies more.

However, it is as yet unclear how many employees had availed of the facility.
ET reported last week that Nasscom had asked the government to relax rules to allow work-from-home for technology and back office staff as a measure to deal with the spread of the Covid-19 virus in India, at least for a month.

Nasscom had written a letter to the Department of Telecom secretary Anshu Prakash, saying that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had recommended removing restrictions around work from home last year after a consultation process.

The letter requested the government's "urgent intervention" to waive-off the conditions as an "emergency" measure for a month, following which the government may take a call depending on the public health situation at that time.

Nasscom had another meeting with DoT on Friday on the issue. "Thank you Secretary @DoT_India for taking the time to talk to us and understand the concerns. Majorly appreciate the same. And we look forward to your support for a speedy resolution. Thank you," Debjani Ghosh, President, Nasscom tweeted on Friday.

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NV (Tiger) Tyagarajan, CEO of Genpact said on Twitter earlier this week, "This is hugely important, have to move with speed with @nasscom support with @DoT_India, we @Genpact have to find a way to serve our clients we have executed in China, Philippines, Romania, US etc .... We need India to follow very fast."

The DoT notification said that companies will have to maintain logs for all "Extended Agent Positions" including their names, physical address and IP address for a period of one year.