

Work from home' is here to stay: Centre eases compliance norms for BPO industry

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The department of telecommunications (DoT) on Thursday relaxed compliance guidelines for information technology (IT)-enabled services such as business process outsourcing (BPO) to allow work from home or anywhere amid the covid-19 crisis.

The DoT quashed the registration process for the BPO industry, categorised as other service providers (OSPs) and engaged in data-related work, according to a government release. The DoT's decision to exempt OSPs from registration differs from the view it had taken earlier.

Seeking clarification on Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's recommendations (Trai), the DoT said data/internet and voice-based OSPs must undergo similar registration process, stating it "will allow good record keeping and proper scrutiny of the information of all OSPs".

In its recommendations released September, Trai said no registration was required for purely data-based OSPs who do not have connectivity to carry voice traffic. However, the telecom regulator said OSPs using voice component must be registered.

"With an aim to qualitatively improve the ease of doing business of the IT Industry, particularly BPO and IT-enabled services, the government has drastically simplified the OSP guidelines of the DoT," said the government release on Thursday.

The DoT also scrapped requirements such as deposit of bank guarantees, static IP (internet protocol) addresses, frequent reporting obligations, publication of network diagram and penal provisions.

"Similarly, several other requirements, which prevented companies from adopting work from home and work from any wheres policies have also been removed. Additional dispensations to enhance flexibility for the Industry have been allowed," the release said.

Commenting on the development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social networking site, Twitter said the decisions will boost productivity and support flexibility in the IT sector.

"India's IT sector is our pride. The prowess of this sector is recognised globally. We are committed to doing everything possible to ensure a conducive environment for growth and innovation in India. Today's decisions will especially encourage young talent in the sector!" Modi said on Twitter.

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Debjani Ghosh, president, National Association of Software and Service Companies, commonly known as Nasscom, lauded the DoT move. "Today's landmark decision is a dream come true! With work from anywhere as our new reality, India will significantly up its game as a global tech leader!" Ghosh said in a Twitter post.