

Office matters

'97 pc firms not aware of sexual harassment at work'

NEW DELHI, PTI: Even though the government is trying hard to crack the whip on employers not adhering to law pertaining to sexual harassment of women at workplace, a large chunk of the private sector is yet to have any awareness about the regulation.

A recent survey carried out by a company on compliance of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 has indicated that 97 per cent of the organisations are not aware about the law and its implementation.

Besides, responses to RTI applications by the company have revealed that only one state – Rajasthan – has appointed the mandatory Local Complaints Committee and Nodal Officers through its District Officers for monitoring of

the law, while seven others – Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Goa – have initiated the process partially.

According to the company officials, awareness about the law and its applicability is the biggest challenge.

"There are several myths related to the law like one need not comply in case there are no women employees or if you are a small or medium enterprise. Further, companies also feel that the law is for the protection of women employees only and not all women involved. Most of them don't know that an organisation is liable even if the victim is not an employee," said Vishal Kedia, Director of Complykaro.

Over 520 cases of sexual harassment of women at workplace were reported during 2014, of which, 57 cases were

reported in office premises and 469 registered at other places related to work, the Women and Child Development Ministry had informed Parliament during the recently concluded monsoon session. "People need to be made aware that there are disclosure requirements in the annual report, apart from annual report filing by Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) with the district officer," he said.

The WCD Ministry has written to the Corporate Affairs Ministry asking it to notify constitution of ICC as a mandatory disclosure under Section 134 of the Companies Act.

The law, enacted in December 2013, was laid down to ensure that women in particular are protected against sexual harassment at all workplaces, be it public or private.

