



55 pvt companies to disclose staff's caste in annual reports next year

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New Delhi : In its first demonstration of "affirmative action", 55 of Corporate India's top 1,000 companies have decided to make "caste disclosures" of their workforce in their annual reports next financial year. Led by almost all companies of the \$70.8 billion Tata Group, the select and progressive list of 55 includes Mahindra & Mahindra and Godrej Industries from the Western region.

These companies — mostly in the manufacturing sector — are part of a larger list of 696 companies that are signatory to the Confederation of Indian Industry's Code of Conduct on Affirmative Action that was finalised in 2007. While the code that CII circulated to over 3,000 companies does not require them to disclose their workforce's caste make-up, signatories cannot support discrimination. In fact, they are expected to encourage applications from socially disadvantaged sections.

Another industry body, Associated Chambers of Commerce (Assocham) too has a similar code with 277 direct members having signed up. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) has its own code. While many of its members are yet to react, some of its members have agreed to comply, said a Ficci executive.

Some of the 55 companies that have decided to make caste disclosures include: Tata Motors, Godrej Industries, M&M, Crompton Greaves, Wartsila, Ballarpur Industries, Kinetic, Godrej Boyce and Praj Industries in the Western region; Pricol, Geojit Financial Services, Lakeshore Hospitals and NTTF Industries in the Southern region; Usha Martin, Tata Ryerson, Tata.

55 pvt companies to disclose staff's caste in annual reports next year Steel, Jusco and Tinsplate Company India in the Eastern region; and Max India, JCB India, NDPL and HLS Asia in Northern region.

Conspicuous by its absence in the list is the services sector. When contacted, T V Mohandas Pai, Director, Human Resources, Education, Research and Administration, Infosys Technologies Ltd, said, "We don't ask people their caste. Ours is a white-collar labour force. Ours is an industry where there are more jobs than people and we do not discriminate in whatever we do."

Infosys is a signatory to the CII code, but doesn't plan to ask its employees their caste. Pai said the company did run a large programme for 500 individuals from the disadvantaged section, many of whom got high quality jobs.

While most of Tata Group's manufacturing companies are in the select list of 55, its IT company, Tata Consultancy Services and telecom operator, Tata Tele-Services Ltd, are absent.

"It is sensitive to ask an employee his/ her caste. This is a big problem even if companies have to collate such data," said the CEO of a big Mumbai-headquartered company. It is not just this CEO, many others too face a

similar predicament. When asked if chambers can really do something about it, a CII executive said the Tatas are willing to share their experiences of such an exercise they conducted across their group companies.

Rahul Bajaj's Bajaj Auto, one of the biggest manufacturing groups in the Western region, is also not part of the list of 55. When contacted, Rahul Bajaj said, "We have such information, but there are no reasons to disclose them. My shareholders are not interested. If the government wants, we will be happy to publish it." While Bajaj admitted that the corporate sector has not done enough for the disadvantaged sections, he hoped that the government does not make "affirmative action" mandatory.