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Govt to discuss sops for affirmative action

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Vast potential for corporate involvement: Khurshid.

Kamal Narang



The Minister of State Corporate Affairs and Minority Affairs, Mr Salman Khurshid, flanked by Ms Nafisa Khorakiwala, Chairperson of the Khorakiwala Foundation, and Mr Anil Agrawal, former President of Assocham at the 'India Leadership Conclave '09', organised by the Wockhardt Foundation and Assocham in the Capital on Saturday. —

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Sept. 26 The Government will soon go in for extensive discussions with India Inc and political parties regarding affirmative action based on incentives, the Corporate Affairs and Minority Affairs Minister, Mr Salman Khurshid, said here on Saturday.

He stressed that affirmative action — aimed at giving equal opportunity in employment and education to those from the socially or economically disadvantaged sections of the society — would be the basis on which corporate sector in the country would contribute to inclusive growth.

At a seminar organised by the industry body Assocham, he said that "we (the Government) would discuss affirmative action based on incentives more extensively with the corporate sector and political institutions to see if its viability can be established and accepted by people. I think the potential for corporate involvement in affirmative action is very vast."

Providing opportunities

The idea was to ensure that the corporate sector would adopt equal opportunity practices by providing incentives, just like the tax incentives given by the Government for setting up companies in the backward areas and incentives like tax holidays for Special Economic Zones to encourage exports, Mr Khurshid said.

He said the Equal Right Opportunities Commission Bill will be introduced in the next session of Parliament. The proposals in the Bill will apply to both the Government and private sectors in the area of employment and education. The Commission would make sure that the social diversity of a particular area is reflected in organisations in that area, he had said.

The Commission will have powers to enquire into the diversity profile of any organisation in the public and private sector and also to help in addressing grievances of any individual or a section of people in this regard.

Besides, the Government would soon bring out a database that would help in finding out the diversity profile of any organisation, the Minister said, adding that the emphasis would be to ensure that organisations do not have a diversity deficit (lesser representation of a section of people). Efforts will be made to eliminate any sort of discrimination on the basis of caste, religion or region.

He said the core objective of equal opportunity would be to bring more inclusive growth through transparency, objectivity, justice and fairness.

Bharti-MTN Merger

Mr Khurshid said it was important to bring in equality and equal treatment based on an objective assessment and scientific preference, not on the basis of political motives.

Mr Khurshid said talks are still going on between telecom majors Bharti and MTN, a South African company, on the merger deal, adding that both the companies have set a time-frame for completing the deal.

"The merger deal is their decision to expand their businesses. We (the Government) feel that Indian companies should get such a chance to make their mark in global business. Therefore, this deal should be welcomed," he said.

However, he added that since there are some issues in the merger such as dual listing of the merged entities. The Government will have to see every aspect of the deal before making a final decision.

"In the South African law dual listing is allowed, but we don't have it here. So discussions are going on in this regard," he said.

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