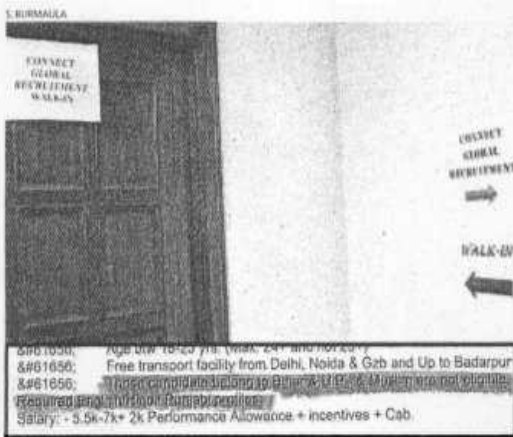




**EMAIL WARY WHITE HOUSE**

The White House is facing problems handling the emails it receives. Read this interesting World 2.0 story on **Page 21**.

# Is Netambit guilty of workplace apartheid?



The office of recruitment agency Connect Global (above). The Netambit office is on the right. Inset: The controversial email advertisement.

**FROM PAGE 1** We next met Uma, who said that she was the HR Head for Netambit. "We do not prefer people from UP and Bihar because of their strong mother tongue influence. But it is not true that they are ineligible. In fact, we also do not prefer candidates from the North East for the same reason," she said. Her explanation for the email issued on their behalf is that the consultancy was trying to malign them.

But Faruqi was firm. "Why should I want to malign them? For me, this is my business. If you ask me up front even I will deny having this kind of a bias. But the fact is that they have clearly told me that candidates from UP, Bihar and Muslims are not eligible," he said. "We have been getting them candidates for the past three months. We have been verbally instructed that they don't want candidates from UP and Bihar. They also do not want Muslims. I myself am a Muslim, but we didn't probe much because for us this is pure business. They are our clients, they have specific needs, we service those needs," he added.

But while this one particular instance has come out in black and white, there are many instances where the apartheid remains in the grey area. Keith Rowe, Director, HR Solutions, another consultancy that was recruiting for BPOs till a year ago, confirmed, "This kind of preconditioning exists in both big and small BPOs. We had many clients telling us categorically that they did not want candidates from a particular state, belonging to a particular caste or creed. In fact, this caste sys-

tem works in another way in this sector. Looks and gender can also be qualifiers or disqualifiers. We would also get requests for "hot" good looking girls because "they add to the glam quotient of the office environment," he said.

Sanjay (name changed) works with Genpact Hyderabad. He comes from Bihar but has convinced everyone around him that he is actually from West Bengal. "I have seen my Bihari friends being scorned and made fun of. Even the managers use derogatory terms to refer to us. I chose to hide my origin not because I am ashamed but because I just want to fit in," he said.

Akhilesh Karn, earlier working with GE Money in Gurgaon, from Bihar, had a tough time getting his last job. "Due to our accent, it is very difficult to get a job in an international BPO. Even in domestic BPOs, we are treated very shoddily. Because the managers know that we have a tough time getting jobs, they make us work longer shifts without any overtime. This is especially true of the smaller BPOs where there is nobody to implement good HR policies," he said.

While Nasscom declined to comment on the issue, the Business Process Industry Association of India (BPIAI) termed this incident as unfortunate. "This industry is an equal opportunity employer. Caste, creed, race, sex, religion and different ability is no reason to discriminate any employee in this industry," said Sam Chopra, president BPIAI.

**METRONOW LITMUS TEST**

Our reporter Nitish Singh, who incidentally belongs to Bihar, called up recruitment agency Connect Global posing as a Muslim job-seeker. Here is an excerpt from the conversation.

**MN:** *Raj Ji, mera naam Haider Ali hai aur main BPO mein job karna chahta hun. Ek ad aya tha mere paas. But usme ye likha hai ki Bihari, UP-wale or Muslims apply karne ke liye eligible nahin hain.*

**Raj:** *Dekhiye hum apko recruit nahin karenge. Apko company recruit karenge aur har company ki apni guideline hoti hai.*

**MN:** *To Raj Ji, main Muslim hoon, main apply karoon ya nahin?*

**Raj:** *Dekhiye jis company ke liye hum recruit kar rahe hain usse intimation mila hai UP, Bihar aur Muslims ke bare mein. Main kal company se baat karunga. Beech mein do din chhutti ho gayee thi. Aap agar apna resume bhejna chahte hain to bhej dijiye. Lekin ek bar baat karne ke baad hi kuchh clear hoga.*

The company's behaviour is highly objectionable. People should be given jobs based on merit and not on their statehood or religion. Discriminatory feelings that are underneath will begin to simmer. This company is taking a suicidal step, for all the good people will keep away from a company indulging in such practices. This advertisement barring people from UP, Bihar and Muslims makes no sense at all. It just looks like Raj Thackeray's actions have had far flung implications.

— MUFTI MUKARRAM  
Imam, Fatehpuri Mosque