

Economic Times – 04.04.2014

By PTI

India Inc joins pitch to spread poll fever

NEW DELHI: As poll fever grips the nation, corporate biggies like Tatas, Birlas, Hero and Infosys have launched special initiatives to enthuse their own staff and general public to vote and some of them are even promising gifts and other incentives for their employees who vote.

Besides, many companies have either declared the day off on voting day and others are encouraging the staff to take at least half-a-day off to cast their votes.

Besides other efforts, many companies have already facilitated the process for voter registration which in turn could lead to increased turnout at polling booths during the Lok Sabha polls, which are scheduled to begin on April 7 and would continue till May 12 spreading over nine phases.

The companies are also using audio-visual materials, posters, images and stories of experiences to motivate employees to vote.

Leading conglomerate Tata Group is running an initiative called "Power of 49", a creative campaign that aims to enable and educate India's women voters, who constitute 49 per cent of the electorate of the largest democracy in the world.

To spread the reach of this program, Tata Steel has taken efforts to identify evangelists who spread their reach in the peripheral regions and surrounding villages across Jamshedpur.

The teams organised voter ID registration camps to touch the maximum number of people and the efforts were applauded by many which resulted in 4000 plus registrations at the camps for voting.

The Tata Group is also helping in facilitating registrations across its operational areas along with other offices and actively communicating to ensure that all its employees must exercise their voting rights.

Meanwhile, Infosys Bangalore has an employee-led campaign to create awareness on the relevance of voting. The team created two separate programs, one for Infosians and their family members to register and the other for the entire city.

A resource hub was created and launched to enable online registrations. The team is working with the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in Bangalore.

The team also worked with educational institutions, participated in SMS campaigns, street plays, puppet shows, quizzes, debates and flash mobs in various shopping malls and campuses of corporate houses.

Among others, FMCG giant HUL has launched an advertising campaign to encourage

people to vote, while similar initiatives have been taken by Birla group firm Idea Cellular, Hero Motocorp, ITC, Tata Tea, Google India and MTV India, among others.

The initiatives are mainly aimed at combating voter apathy, which can be largely attributed to lack of voter trust and interest in political as well as electoral process and is mostly seen in the urban parts of the country, people involved with such initiatives say.

There are also companies who have announced gifts and parties for the staff members who cast their votes, while special workshops are also being held in corporate offices.

"From starting online forums for voting, to sending emails reminding employees that April 10th is not a 'holiday' to creating posters to encourage employees to cast their vote, firms are going all out.

"Some companies hold workshops to increase awareness among their employees on why voting is important," said executive search firm Spearhead InterSearch Founder and Managing Director Jyorden T Misra.

Elaborating on the various initiatives that retail chain Savemax has taken, its MD & CEO Vaibhav Singhal said, "We have declared an off for employees at our corporate office and a half day holiday for store employees. For those employees who exercise their right to vote, we plan to organise a party the next day and also give gift vouchers."

GHCLBSE Vice President and Head-HR Rajesh Tripathi said, "Our organisation intranet displays a continuous pop up as part of reminder for our employees as the polling day nears."

Many companies have announced discounts on their products and services for those who exercise their voting rights.

ShopClues.com CEO & Co-Founder Sanjay Sethi said, "Anyone who casts vote is entitled to a discount of Rs 100 on minimum purchase of Rs 500 along with this we are sending out regular updates on the election manifesto and they are circulated internally.