

Paid menstrual leave for private sector workforce: Karnataka rolls out Menstrual Leave Policy, 2025

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The Government of Karnataka, through a government order dated 20 November 2025 (Order), has issued the much-talked-about Menstrual Leave Policy, 2025 (Policy). The implementation of this Order marks Karnataka as the first Indian state to bring in a state policy on menstrual leave, applicable to not just public sector employers but also private establishments.

In this update, we discuss the key features of the Order.

Applicability

- As per the Order, the Policy has wide scope of applicability, encompassing all sectors, government offices, and private entities.
- This means that establishments registered under the Factories Act, 1948, the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, the Plantations Labour Act 1951, the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 and the Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961 – some of which got replaced by the now enforced labour codes – are required to provide menstrual leave.

Eligible workforce

As per the Order, the women personnel in the age group of 18 to 52 years, irrespective of their nature of engagement as employee or contract worker, are eligible to avail menstrual leave.

Menstrual leave entitlement

As per the Order, the eligible women personnel can take 1 day of paid menstrual leave during their menstrual cycle, per month, amounting to a total of 12 days of menstrual leaves per year.

No carry forward of leave

As per the Order, the eligible women personnel are required to exercise their menstrual leave per month, as there is no provision for carry forward.

Medical certificate

The Order also clarifies that an establishment cannot demand medical certification from the women employee, to substantiate her claim for a menstrual leave.

Comments

The Policy appears to be well intentioned as it aims to create an equitable working environment wherein health and wellbeing of the women workforce is prioritized. Thus far, states such as Bihar and Odisha have envisaged such entitlements, although limited to the employees working in the government sector. In that

sense, Karnataka has taken a different direction to extend the menstrual leave benefit to the workforce in the private sector.

Notwithstanding the progressive rationale behind the Policy, the enforceability of the Order has been questioned basis the premise that a policy of the state government cannot subsume the need for statutory amendment to extant laws to mandate such entitlement. Given this, a strict statutory take on the provisions of the Order would be that this may only be considered as a directive and not a mandatory statutory requirement. It is unclear whether the state government would consider the Order as a precursor to bringing about specific amendments to the laws referenced in the Order, but it would be interesting to see whether the Order would prompt establishments to revisit their diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

- *Anshul Prakash (Partner), Deeksha Malik (Principal Associate) and Akshita Sharma (Associate)*



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