November 2025

Karnataka introduces paid menstrual leave for women

Karnataka has made a landmark move by becoming the first State in India to implement a paid menstrual leave policy, granting 1 (one) day of paid leave every month for its female workforce.

On October 18, 2025, the Government of Karnataka had announced a proposal to introduce annual paid menstrual leave for women employees. The government had invited suggestions, objections, and opinions from factory owners, industry representatives, women's associations, labour unions, and members of the public. After reviewing the feedback, majority of the stakeholders expressed support for the initiative.

Following deliberation amongst the relevant stakeholders, the State Cabinet has approved the implementation of the "Menstrual Leave Policy 2025" ("**Menstrual Leave Policy**") which was notified on November 12, 2025, which will now apply across the State of Karnataka.

Key highlights

Under the Menstrual Leave Policy, all women employees between the ages of 18 (eighteen) and 52 (fifty-two), including those employed on a permanent, contractual, or outsourced basis, are entitled to 12 (twelve) days of paid menstrual leave annually, which will be provided as 1 (one) day of paid leave each month.

The Menstrual Leave Policy covers women working in all industries and establishments covered 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, within the State of Karnataka.

This menstrual leave entitlement is provided in addition to all other statutory or contractual leave benefits such as annual leave, maternity leaves and sick-cum casual leaves. Employees are expected to utilise the menstrual leave within the month for which it is applicable. Carryover or accumulation of unused menstrual leave to subsequent months is not permitted under the Menstrual Leave Policy.

Furthermore, the Menstrual Leave Policy makes it clear that no medical certificate or proof will be required for availing this leave.

Conclusion

The Menstrual Leave Policy marks a progressive and inclusive step by the Karnataka State government, signaling a broader commitment to gender-sensitive labour reforms and workplace equality. Although the proposal to provide menstrual leaves was initially criticised on the basis that it could adversely affect the employability of women, the order notes that majority of the comments received on the proposal were supportive of the move and recommended for 12 (twelve) days of paid leave as opposed to the initially envisaged 6 (six) days of paid leave.

The Menstrual Leave Policy also seeks to normalise menstruation as a legitimate facet of health that can influence one's attendance, concentration and overall well-being, thereby reducing the long-standing stigma surrounding this subject. While this move is undoubtedly progressive, this policy should be used as a genuine support mechanism. In other words, employers and employees alike must approach this reform with a shared sense of purpose, that is, to sustain productivity while honouring health, dignity and gender equity.

Across India, many organisations already place a strong emphasis on employee wellness, weaving it into their core business strategy. For example, many companies have instituted flexible work arrangements, mental health days, access to telemedicine, preventive health checkups and employee assistance services. These initiatives coupled with the Karnataka government's move, collectively signals a shift towards holistic employee care that recognises the links between health, morale and performance.

As other States watch closely, Karnataka's approach is expected to spark broader conversations about employee well-being, productivity and dignity. However, adoption of a similar policy in other states is likely to be influenced by local economic conditions, sector mix and administrative capacity. Therefore, the learnings from Karnataka's rollout will be crucial for responsible adoption of the same.

Employment Practice

JSA has a team of experienced employment law specialists who work with clients from a wide range of sectors, to tackle local and cross-border, contentious and non-contentious employment law issues. Our key areas of advice include (a) advising on boardroom disputes including issues with directors, both executive and non-executive; (b) providing support for business restructuring and turnaround transactions, addressing employment and labour aspects of a deal, to minimize associated risks and ensure legal compliance; (c) providing transaction support with reference to employment law aspects of all corporate finance transactions, including the transfer of undertakings, transfer of accumulated employee benefits of outgoing employees to a new employer, redundancies, and dismissals; (d) advising on compliance and investigations, including creating compliance programs and policy, compliance evaluation assessment, procedure development and providing support for conducting internal investigations into alleged wrongful conduct; (e) designing, documenting, reviewing, and operating all types of employee benefit plans and arrangements, including incentive, bonus and severance programs; and (f) advising on international employment issues, including immigration, residency, social security benefits, taxation issues, Indian laws applicable to spouses and children of expatriates, and other legal requirements that arise when sending employees to India and recruiting from India, including body shopping situations.

JSA also has significant experience in assisting employers to ensure that they provide focused and proactive counselling to comply with the obligations placed on employees under the prevention of sexual harassment regime in India. We advise and assist clients in cases involving sexual harassment at the workplace, intra-office consensual relationships, including drafting of prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) policies, participating in POSH proceedings, conducting training for employees as well as Internal Complaints Committee members, and acting as external members of POSH Committees

This Prism is prepared by:

Aishwarya Maria Manjooran
Senior Associate

Rebecca Thomas
Associate

Shubhangi Balshiram Zite
Associate

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