

The Asian Age, 02 Oct 2008

*Novel proposal by women panel*

# PF and pension, leave for maids?

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BENGALURU

**Oct. 1:** You may soon have to walk into a placement agency to get a maid and be prepared to grant her 15 days of leave a year.

If the National Commission for Women has its way, maids will soon sport ID cards and will be entitled for pension, provident fund and accident relief.

The Domestic Workers (Registration, Social security and Welfare) Bill, 2008 also makes it clear that no one can employ a domestic help below the age of 18.

"They are inevitable in our daily lives. Yet they are taken for granted and there have been virtually no rules or regulations governing their employment for years now. Often, there is a lot of exploitation, but they have nowhere to go to redress their grievances. The commission felt it must step in and come to the aid of lakhs of such workers," NCW sources told this newspaper.

If the new legislation, which is pending clearance, comes into force, every state will have a district monitoring board exclusively for domestic workers.

The board in consultation with the state will fix the registration fees,

wages and other working conditions.

The new law will require every employer, service provider and the domestic worker to submit an application to the district board within a month of employment. "When she leaves the territory, she must inform the board and go in for fresh registration at her new place of employment. Every domestic worker must renew the registration every year," NCW sources said.

The rules specify a daily rest period of 10 consecutive hours for maids who stay with the employer and weekly rest for those working part-time.

Anyone violating these terms will invite a penalty of Rs 5,000 and a six-year jail term.

Though Bengaluru has informal unions for domestic maids, they have not been able to get even a weekly off for them.

Says 45-year-old Thimmamma who works in three house in Yeshwantpur and is a union leader, "I work for three hours in each house and they pay me Rs 500 a month. I don't get a weekly off. If I fall sick and am unable to work, my salary is cut. I hope the new law comes into force and we get decent working conditions."

2/10/08

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