

The Asian Age, Mumbai, 17 Mar 2008

Domestic workers bill to decide pay, leave etc.

By Ajit Wakode

Mumbai, Mar. 16: The Maharashtra Domestic Workers (employment regulation and welfare) Bill, if approved in the present state Budget session, it will give lakhs of the workers in the city benefits that are at par with any employee in the private or the public sector.

The bill defines terms like "domestic worker" and the "workplace". At present, there are more than four lakh domestic workers in the city. Washing clothes and utensils, cleaning the floor and furniture, serving guests and taking care of pets are some of the services enlisted in the bill.

As per the bill, a board would be constituted to secure the rights and privileges of the workers. The representatives of the employers, workers and government on the board would be empowered to execute and to take necessary measures for the workers' scheme.

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The board would also regulate the salaries, pensions and working hours of the domestic help. The number of leaves to be granted to the workers for various purposes would be decided by the board.

Apart from the registration of the workers, the employers have to register themselves with the board and have to regularly pay the salary of the workers to the board.

The icing on the cake for domestic workers is that if they are registered with the board and unemployed, they will be provided with a minimum salary by the board.

Meanwhile, the state unit of the National Domestic Workers' Movement (NDWM) demanded that the workers be brought under the Minimum Wages Act. The organisation also demanded provisions in the Budget for their social security and welfare," said Ms Christin Mary, convenor of the state unit of the organisation.

Thousands of workers from Maharashtra's unorganised sector, mainly comprising domestic help, are set to hold a three-day rally from Monday, demanding a separate Budgetary allocation for them. The demonstrations, organised jointly by the Unorganised Workers Security Federation and the NDWM, will be held at Azad Maidan.

The state Budget is slated to be presented on March 19.