

Tata Consultancy Services' Benching Policy Ignites Employee Concerns After First Cycle



Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT services firm, has reportedly completed the first 35-day cycle of its new "benching" policy, sparking significant anxiety and concerns among its vast employee base. The policy, which came into effect on June 12, 2025, limits the time an employee can remain without an assigned project to just 35 business days per year, after which they face potential consequences ranging from demotion to job termination.

This stricter approach to workforce management is causing widespread unease, with many employees expressing their worries on social media platforms like Reddit. A primary concern is the perceived pressure to accept projects that do not align with their skill sets or training. For instance, an employee trained in Java reportedly stated they were "forced into a support project that doesn't use Java or Python" after just a month on the bench. Others have cited difficulties in securing projects in their preferred locations or experiencing rejections during client interviews.

The Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES), an IT workers' union, has formally complained to the Ministry of Labour and Employment against TCS, terming the policy "inhumane" and "exploitative." NITES President Harpreet Singh Saluja argued that the policy "institutionalizes a culture of fear, pressure, [and] psychological burden on employees who are between projects." The union further alleged that employees are being threatened with termination or denied experience letters if they fail to meet "unrealistic deployment timelines."

TCS, with a workforce exceeding 6.13 lakh (613,000) employees, typically has a portion of its staff on the "bench", a period where employees are not assigned to billable client projects. While

industry estimates suggest that 15-18% of employees at major Indian IT firms are usually on the bench, the new 35-day limit drastically shortens this period, placing increased pressure on employees to secure new assignments rapidly. Under the new policy, employees are mandated to be billed for at least 225 business days annually.

TCS CEO and MD K. Krithivasan has maintained that the new policy is not a fundamental shift but rather a "more structured version of what's long been in practice," emphasizing that employees are expected to take responsibility for their careers and proactively seek new assignments. He noted that while HR supports project placement, deployments are driven by client needs and skill alignment.

However, the tightened policy arrives amidst a challenging macroeconomic environment for the IT sector, with TCS reporting a third consecutive quarter of degrowth. Rising employee costs and the increasing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) automating repetitive tasks are also prompting companies to optimize workforce utilization. This new benching policy by TCS may set a precedent, potentially leading other IT firms to adopt similar stringent measures to manage their unallocated workforce and maintain profit margins. The implications for job security and employee well-being within the sector will remain a key area of observation.