

Hire and fire continues in Assam's media



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Daya Nath Singh 19 April 2010 14480 views

Taking advantage of easily available MASS communication degree holders and serious unemployment problems in the state the media houses in Assam have got an opportunity to 'hire and fire' the media men, whimsically. The Fourth Estate in Assam is deprived of 'fair deals' despite the existing 'The Working Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Condition of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955, enforced. Under this Act, the Central Government constituted Wage Board for suggesting salary and perks for journalists and other workers in media. This Act is confined and has its jurisdiction up to print media only. In the year 1985, the Bachhawat Wage Board recommended salaries and wages for media persons for the first time and after a lapse of 13 years, Manisana Singh Wage Board revised the earlier recommendations in 1998.

Now the Fourth Estate is not confined to print media alone. The Electronic and Web media have made inroads in this field. They have expanded their wings very fast. This Act does not have any control over them. This has led the media magnets an opportunity to 'hire and fire' the workers and exploiting them at the cheapest cost. The Wage Board's recommendations have gone in the dust bins of maximum newspapers. Only a few have reputation of adhering the recommendations and paying, that too according to Manisana Singh Wage Board's recommendations of 1998. Meanwhile, the Central Government constituted another Wage Board on May 24, 2007, the term of which is going to end by May 24 next. The Wage Board was asked to submit its report by this time. But according to available reports, Justice G R Majhithiar Commission could not do much progress in this case. Under the circumstances, the press people are still supposed to get the wages according to the recommendations of Manisana Singh Wage Board's recommendations, which are also not paid by most of the media houses.

It may be noted here, that the Central and State government's salaries have been revised several times. Emoluments in UGC and the Central organizations have also been revised many times. The media people have to bear the brunt of price rise with their limited income to support their families. On the other hand in Assam, most of the media houses do not issue appointment letters to their staff and deprive them of the benefits of provident fund, gratuity, medical benefits, earned leave and bonus etc,. Even state government publicizing too much about various welfare schemes for the people and society does not feel it necessary to check-up the malpractices going on in the local media. The state government is supposed to be duty bound to see whether the recommendations of wage Board have been applied in the organizations or not.

Since most of the media houses are controlled by politicians and other influential persons, the government seems very much reluctant to look into the welfare of media people. The press people have no security of life even. A number of journalists have been killed by security personnel, anti-socials and militants during last two decades. But the government remained unmoved and failed to provide any relief to the families of the victims or bringing the culprits to the book.

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