

Newsmen' demand



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Raktim Baruah 16 April 2014 Updated 16 Apr 7322 views

All Assam Media Employees' Federation (AAMEF) has welcome the recent verdict of the Supreme Court to implement the Majithia Wage Board recommendations for journalists & non-journalists newspaper & news agency employees from this month onwards and urged the media house owners to follow the ruling of the apex court of India.

It may be mentioned that the Supreme Court on April 9 had dismissed the plea of various newspaper managements seeking review of its judgment directing them to implement the recommendations of Justice Majithia Wage Board for media employees on their pay structure and ruled that the wages as revised would be payable from November 11, 2011 when the Centre notified the recommendations of the Board. "All the arrears up to March 2014 shall be paid to all eligible employees in four equal installments within a period of one year and continue to pay the revised wages from April 2014 onwards," added the verdict. The Bench comprising Chief Justice P Sathasivam and Justice Ranjan Gogoi & Justice Shiva Kirti Singh said in the order, "We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers. We find no merit in the review petitions and the same are accordingly dismissed."

AAMEF president Hiten Mahanta in a statement also appreciated the management of The Assam Tribune group of newspapers for implementing the Majithia Wage Board recommendations for the first time in the country. He asserted that the Guwahati based pioneer media house has established that the latest wage board is very much implementable if the managements do have minimum commitments to the medium. Even voices for implementation of the new wage board have been raised by the Hong Kong based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), a regional non-governmental organisation that monitors human rights in Asia and advocates for justice & institutional reform to ensure the protection & promotion of the rights.

“Taking the recent Supreme Court (of India) judgment as a standard, the AHRC urges the media houses to honour and implement the Majithia Wage Board recommendations as a matter of priority. The State governments must take measures to ensure a safe working atmosphere for journalists and make special provisions for social benefits like health & life insurance,” said a recent statement from the Hong Kong based organization.

It is observed that most of the media groups of Assam have made it a habit to show a loss-making balance sheet every year to avoid paying proper salaries to the employees. But except few, it's a common practice for all the media barons in the State to divert funds from the collected amount of money from the advertisers to other non-media enterprises owned by their families.

“Thus the newspaper owners continue siphoning away the essential resource of the media groups for their selfish interest only to showcase the media business as an unprofitable endeavour,” asserted the AAMEF statement.

Meanwhile, Journalists' Forum Assam (JFA) has urged the Union government to facilitate the media persons engaged with the privately owned satellite news channels with systematic pay hike like their counterparts in the print media. The Assam based scribes' body pointed out that nearly 80% television journalists of northeast India are still performing their duties with pitiable salaries, unlimited working hours and without any facilities recommended by the country's labour laws not to speak of any statutory wage board recommendations. "We urge both the Union Labour and I&B ministry with the State governments of the alienated region to look into the matter seriously as the managements continue employing the journalists with deplorable wages and depriving them other due legitimate facilities," said Rupam Barua, president of JFA.

Finally both the AAMEF and JFA have reiterated their demand for a social media audit in northeast India where the readers and viewers can find a transparent picture of the financial dealings involved with their favourite newspapers and private news channels. The media audit should address many vital issues relating to the media market in the country, asserted the media employees' organizations adding that the exercise would hopefully help the media employees to receive their due benefits supported by the law of the land.

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