

remuneration of a regular journalist of a news organisation with a proviso that he is working for only one news organisation. And if a part-timer is associated with more than one newspaper, his remuneration of 50 per cent would be borne by the different newspapers proportionately. But even this unsatisfactory recommendation is ignored by almost entire newspaper industry.

The National Union of Journalists (India)'s submission has been that there is no journalist who can be called a part-time journalist. His duties are not confined to any particular part of the day. Rather a mufasil journalist has to be vigilant all the time and is supposed to run for news-gathering even during odd hours sans any extra support or payment.

A part-time journalist, like a fulltimer, is fully responsible to collect, write and send important news and the write-ups to the head office before the deadline everyday. He is not supposed to and cannot afford to miss any news in the today's competitive environment. A rail accident or a naxalite attack in any remote and inaccessible area, the local part-time journalist being nearest to the spot of happening is supposed to and is also told to rush to the site and file the first report.

A part-time journalist is a bona fide representative of the news organisation, he serves, in his area. Local officials, political party leaders and elected representatives all recognise him and deal with him only for coverage.

The NUJ(I) has come to know that after the previous Wage Boards' recommendations the newspaper organisations have started new tactics to deny to part-time journalists their dues as per these recommendations. They have

started forcing part-time journalists to sign on letters dictated by them saying that they are working as citizen journalists and that there was no employer-employee relationship between the journalist and the organisation.

The NUJ(I) has been demanding that the mufasil (part-time) journalist should be called Field Journalist and be considered as regular staff journalist and should be made eligible for a salary and other benefits given to the later. As such he should be issued appointment letter in which the factual position of the "principal avocation" should be stated. (It should be noted that no appointment letters are given to part-time correspondents by any organisation describing their work under different labels at present.)

That in terms of the Supreme Court Judgement in the Management of Express Newspapers Ltd. V/s. B.Somayjulu 1964(3) SCR 100 the term "principal avocation" under section 2(f), which qualifies a journalist to be a working journalist has been spelt out as "the gains made by him by pursuing the career of a journalist as compared with the gains made by him in the pursuit of other callings or professions".

That given the bargaining position vis-à-vis the employer especially in the districts, the part-time working journalist can have little or no material to show that journalism is his principal avocation. In any event to claim his just dues under the Act he must litigate and with the burden of proof on him he must necessarily lose in the absence of material.

That in terms of the Supreme Court's judgment in 1964(3) SCR 100 the part time journalist must be in "exclusive employment because a working journalist cannot serve two employers". However, this is

wholly contrary to the ground reality since a working journalist may be required to work part-time for several newspaper establishments simply because no full time employment is available.

That similarly there are several freelance journalists who work regularly for a newspaper establishment but due to the market forces of employment they are denied their just wages or payments. Such journalists, some of them even accredited as freelance with state accreditation agencies, are paid u/s. 8 of the Act on a "piece rate" basis.

We have also been demanding that the Working Journalist Act, in particular its Section 2(f), should be suitably amended to redefine so that field journalists are not denied their dues.

The present definition insists that the working journalist should have journalism as his principal avocation. The Management by denying field journalists their full dues, forces them to seek other avenues of income and then reverse the argument that they can't demand their legal dues as working journalist as their principal avocation is not journalism. This chicken and egg situation needs to be broken herewith by recommending living wages to mufasil journalists and making changes in the definition of the working journalist to enforce the proper wages.

The proper wages is the pre-requisite for the nourishment of this crucial link. Only a proper wage structure for part-time journalist would attract proper kind of talent in this profession. The time has come when not only National and State capital levels journalism requires well trained human resources but mufasil correspondents also needed to be brilliant ones.