

UPFA in parliament, where the government enjoyed two third majority. She said the government has failed to prosecute any of the perpetrators of the killings, abductions, assaults and other forms of violence against mediapersons in the recent past.

Representative from Maldives said politically charged and gang-related violence against journalists and media institutions have become a major issue. In his report, Haroon Habib of Bangladesh, who was supposed to attend the workshop but could not come due to refusal of visa, said there is no dearth of incidents of harassment of journalists from vested quarters for reporting on their wrongdoings and transgressions, particularly outside the capitals. Mr Ujjawal Acharya of Federation of Nepal Journalists said in the last 15 months there were 125 incidents that directly targeted media houses and journalists in Nepal.

## Discussion on Wage Board

Discussion on Wage Board was chaired by Mr Sukumar Muralidharan. In the country report presented at the workshop I informed the gathering about the constant fight by NUJ (I) for better wages and facilities to mediapersons in India. Regarding the recommendations of Justice Majithia Wage Board, I pointed out that like every time the newspaper owners have started a campaign to sabotage the Wage Board's recommendations and also to block the process of government notifying these recommendations as required under the Working Journalists Act. The owners have now gone to the Supreme Court demanding stay on the recommendations, which the Supreme Court declined.

The newspaper owners have been claiming that the newspaper industry has suffered by the so-called "high wages" imposed due to the Boards, but it has no truth. In

50 years since the Working Journalists Act and the Wage Boards constituted under it, the newspaper industry has gone from strength to strength. Just to quote the figures of 2008-09, there were 73,158 newspapers of different descriptions in the country. The dailies alone grew in 2006-07 to 2008-09 from 8,675 to 11752, the small newspapers also grew from 6,508 to 8,873, the medium ones from 1,797 to 2,445 and big ones from 370 to 434.

There is no record of a single newspaper being closed because it could not pay Board-declared wages-only 12 newspapers out of the total 73,158 closed in 2008-09 and for reasons including family feuds within the newspaper families. Only 7 out of the thousands of existing newspapers closed down in 2007-08-all these are as per the reports of Registrar Newspapers India (RNI). According to Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of the newspaper industry as recorded by the Majithia Wage Board, the gross value of newspapers from 1993-94 to 2007-08 rose from Rs 36,625.2 crore to Rs 68,853.2 crore.

A whole range of newspapers show huge rise in their revenues and in circulations during all the five decades of wage board declared wage scales in the industry. The Times of India Group increased its revenue from 785 crore to Rs 3540 crore between 1995-98 to 2006-09 (blocks of three-year average)-there is increase of 350.91 per cent. Medium newspapers like *Samaj*, *Samyukta Karnataka*, *Sakal* have shown rise of 101.05 per cent, 310.90 per cent and 216.55 per cent respectively. Similarly, the Hindu Group registered 163.10%, Malayalam Manorama 216.55%, Eenadu Group 229.02%, Tribune Group 125.01% and Manipal Printers 172.84%. According to an independent study, the newspapers spent only 10 to 11 per cent of their

gross revenue on employees on average despite such growth.

The Wage Board has clearly said that with this increased wages it would become about 13 per cent of the gross revenue in respect of newspaper establishments falling in Class I to IV. This would therefore result in further burden of just 3.5 per cent of the gross revenue. For Class V to VII it is 3 per cent of gross revenue. This too would dissipate over the period as per the past record.

## Contract system in Media

The representatives expressed deep concern over the journalist losing job security due to growing hire and fire system. Today over 80 per cent of the journalists in various media houses are working on contract. It is a new challenge for all journalists unions fighting for the cause of mediapersons. The people working on contract are deprived of the regular facilities like bonus, leaves etc. which are normally granted to the permanent employees.

## Erosion in Editor's institution

In the country report I drew the attention of the participants to the declining credibility of the media and also the editors. The incidents of Niira Radia and Ghulam Nabi Fai are the result of this generation only. Both these incidents have tarnished the image of the entire Indian media in the eyes of the public. The NUJ (I) has been fighting to arrest such harmful emerging trends to save the credibility of the media.

Since the NUJ (I) firmly believes in democracy and follows it in all its activities and decisions, I informed the participants that the organisational elections were held on November 28, 2010 at Biennial Conference held in Gurgaon, Haryana. Shri Pragyand Choudhury and Shri Ras Bihari were elected President and Secretary General respectively.