



Press Council of India
New Delhi

Sub-Committee to Examine the Issue of Advertisement

CAMP

GANGTOK (SIKKIM)

November 4-5, 2015

(Gurinder Singh)
Convenor

(Prabhat Kumar Dash)
Member

COMMITTEE REPORT TO EXAMINE THE ISSUE OF ADVERTISEMENT

The Council in its meeting held on December 19, 2014 while considering the issue threats/problems being faced by the Medium and Small newspapers for non-adoption of the Model Advertisement/Accreditation Rules-2014 framed by the Press Council had constituted a two member Sub-Committee to examine the issue of Advertisement comprising of S/Shri Gurinder Singh, Convenor and Prabhat Kumar Dash, Member.

The Sub-Committee visited Gangtok, Sikkim from November 4-5, 2015 and invited stakeholders from Big, Small and Medium newspapers as well as the authorities of the State Government of Sikkim to interact simultaneously on November 4, 2015 across the table to avoid communication gap and follow the principle of transparency.

About 25-30 Stakeholders from Big, Small and Medium newspapers and Nodal Officer appointed by the Government of Sikkim, namely Mr. Shyam Pradhan, Under Secretary, Information and Public Relations Department along with his team of officers were present in the Conference Hall, Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok.

DEPOSITION

Editors and publishers of various media organizations of Sikkim shared that media in Sikkim has failed to take up as a commercial enterprise and are facing financial constraints to run their newspapers in a smooth manner. The major grievance shared was the inordinate delay by departments to release payments for the government

advertisements published in local newspapers despite a standing directive that all advertisement bills should be cleared within three months.

They submitted that Media Houses in Sikkim were not so big, and are dependent on Government advertisements and non-payment of bills by various government departments is one of the major problems. Bills of past 6-7 years are pending with the Information & Public Relations Department and there is no positive response from their side regarding the payment.

They said that the issue of delay in clearing the government advertisement bills can be resolved through a single window system and the State Government can also adopt the DAVP model for clearing the advertisement bills.

The stakeholders demanded a special advertisement package from the Union Government for Northeastern States, the advertisements which were 7 in numbers and were reduced to 3 in a year by the Sikkim Government should be restored back to 7 was the major concern.

The stakeholders also briefed on how many newspapers in Sikkim are on the verge of closure due to lack of desired government advertisements. It was also pointed out that several local weekly newspapers have been shut down and remaining are on verge of closure after the government advertisements were reduced.

They also demanded quarters for the journalists by the government and other benefits for accredited media persons like

medical allowances for the journalists and free travel for accredited media persons in state transport.

The local media houses also demanded that the State government must allocate two percent from the State funds for advertisements into the welfare fund for journalists.

Information & Public Relations department is not taking any responsibility for collection of advertisements dues from the concerned departments. They further submitted that whenever, they asked the Information & Public Relations Department regarding payment of bills, they said due to shortage of funds it is not possible.

Departments such as Tourism Department; HRD Department; Road & Bridges Department; Power Department; Rural Management Department; and Primary Health and Education Departments are not releasing their advertisement payments.

They also submitted that the readership of vernacular papers is dying due to the lack of interest in the young generation as they feel it is against the modern times.

There are many women Owner/journalists/editors in the state but they do not get any priority or incentives from the State Government.

They also submitted that earlier the government reimbursed the medical bills upto Rs.20,000/- to journalists which has now been withdrawn by the State Government.

There is no facility for the accredited journalists like free travelling in the state transport, concession in railway reservations.

They further informed the Sub-Committee that the government has not created any welfare fund for the journalists of the State as reporting in the hill areas come under the threat of avlanchche and landslides due to which many have lost their lives in the past and there is no future security of their kith and kin.

FINDINGS

1. Enhancement of Advertisements and its budget
2. Payment of bills in stipulated time
3. There should be an empanelment procedure in the State government.
4. Welfare fund for journalists & Small & Medium Newspapers
5. Priority to women owners/editors/journalists
6. Free govt. transportation for journalists
7. Encouragement to vernacular media
8. Special consideration for newspapers published from hill areas.

GOVERNMENT VIEW

The Secretary, I&PRST Department, Ms. C.C. Wandge while interacting with the Sub-Committee submitted that curtailment of the advertisements is the decisions of the government as they are short of funds and it is just a temporary phase. A group of journalists have already met the Chief Minister in this regard who has assured them that this situation will not continue for long.

The Secretary informed the Sub-Committee that as and when they receive the grant from the government they will clear all the pending bills. The Secretary added that the department is giving

priority to all language newspapers without any discrimination and all the facilities are being provided as per the guidelines.

The Secretary also apprised the Committee that the State Government provided medical facilities to the accredited journalists of the State and their families. The Secretary also informed that the transportation was free for local travel which will be extended throughout the state as directed by the Committee. The Secretary assured the Committee that whatever steps possible to enhance the conditions of the journalists and the Small & Medium Newspapers will be taken as they were also concerned for the revival and survival of Small & Medium Newspapers.

They were thankful to the Press Council of India for coming to the State and raising the issues for the welfare of the State and its media fraternity. They agreed to implement the Model Code of Press Council of India in *toto*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advertisement Policy should be prepared in conformity with the Model Advertisement Rules-2014 prepared by the Press Council of India.
2. Advertisement rates should be revised after a specific period of time.
3. The Ratio of the advertisement should be 50% for Big, 35% for Medium and 15% for Small Newspapers.

4. Representation of Members of Press Bodies notified by the Press Council of India should be included in the inter departmental Committees.
5. There should be a centralized mechanism for payment of bills and those who are defaulters, their advertisements should not be issued by the Information & Public Relations Department to be published till the dues are paid.
6. Priority to be given to vernacular media while giving empanelment and issuing advertisements.
7. The budget should be enhanced for the Small & Medium Newspapers in the state as there are not much private players and the whole media fraternity especially Small & Medium Newspapers earn their bread and butter through government advertisements.
8. There should be a journalist welfare fund for the benefit of the working journalist and Government should provide Life/Group Insurance to the journalists with a minimum payment and also provide them Health Insurance for their families.
9. There should be special incentives for women owners/editors/journalists, Information and Public Relations Department should encourage them and a corpus fund for the welfare of the journalists of the state should be created.


(Gurinder Singh)
Convenor


(Prabhat Kumar Dash)
Member