

SENATE OF PAKISTAN



SEVENTEENTH PARLIAMENTARY YEAR 2019-2020

REPORT NO.01 OF 2020

REPORT OF THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

“ON A MATTER REFERRED BY THE HOUSE ON 27TH JANUARY, 2020, REGARDING
NON-PAYMENT OF SALARIES TO WORKING JOURNALISTS BY MANY PRIVATE
MEDIA HOUSES FOR LAST MANY MONTHS”

PRESENTED BY:
SENATOR FAISAL JAVED
CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE

SENATE SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION & BROADCASTING, ON THE MATTER OF NON-PAYMENT OF SALARIES TO WORKING JOURNALISTS BY MANY PRIVATE MEDIA HOUSES FOR THE LAST MANY MONTHS REFERRED BY THE HOUSE ON 27TH JANUARY 2020 FOR REPORT WITHIN SEVEN DAYS.

I, Senator Faisal Javed, Chairman Standing Committee on Information & Broadcasting, have the honor to submit, on behalf of the Committee, this report on the matter regarding “non-payment of salaries to working journalists by many private media houses for the last many months” referred by the House on 27th January 2020 to the Committee for consideration and report within seven days.

2. The composition of the Committee is as under:-

1. Senator Faisal Javed	Chairman
2. Senator Sajjad Hussain Turi	Member
3. Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar	Member
4. Senator Khushbakht Shujat	Member
5. Senator Syed Muhammad Sabir Shah	Member
6. Senator Dr. Ghous Muhammad Khan Niazi	Member
7. Senator Kamran Michael	Member
8. Senator Pervaiz Rashid	Member
9. Senator Moula Bux Chandio	Member
10. Senator Rubina Khalid	Member
11. Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zuberi	Member
12. Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo	Member
13. Senator Atta Ur Rehman	Member
14. Minister In-charge for Information and Broadcasting	Ex-Officio Member

3. The Committee held threadbare discussion on the matter in its two meetings held on 29th January & 3rd February, 2020. The following attended the meetings.

1. Senator Faisal Javed	Chairman
2. Senator Sajjad Hussain Turi	Member
3. Senator Syed Muhammad Sabir Shah	Member
4. Senator Pervaiz Rashid	Member

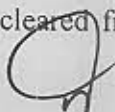


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| 5. Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zuberi | Member |
| 6. Senator Rubina Khalid | Member |
| 7. Ms. Firdous Ashiq Awan, Special Assistant to the PM on Information | |

4. On special invitation, President Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA), President Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), President Rawalpindi/Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ), President All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Chairman Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA), and Chairman Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), also attended the meeting to brief the Committee on the matter. Secretary Information and Broadcasting Division, Representatives of Ministry of Finance, Chairman PTV, Chairman PEMRA and Principal Information Officer attended the meeting to brief the Committee on government's stance in the matter.

5. Chairman Committee informed the House that parliamentary reporters staged a token walkout from Senate's sitting on 27th January 2020 in protest against no payment of salaries to a large number of working journalists by private media houses for the last many months, which had also led to death of a cameraman who had not received salary for nine months. Thereafter, the Chairman Senate referred the matter to the Standing Committee for consideration and report within seven days. He also recalled that before this too the Committee had taken notice of this issue during the month of Ramzan and passed directions for immediate payment of salaries before Eid-ul-Fitr. Thereafter, similar directions were passed in a meeting before Eid-ul-Azha too. He also noted that this issue also has a human rights as well as labor laws aspect. He also expressed displeasure that despite payment of outstanding dues to media houses by the government, including significant dues carried forward from the time of previous government for advertisements against the current ruling party, the issue of non-payment of salaries of working journalists had remained unresolved.

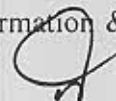
6. The representative of Parliamentary Reporters Association thanked the Chairman Senate and the Standing Committee for taking notice of their issue and providing an opportunity to highlight their problem before this August forum. He said that this issue has already been reported in detail in the daily newspapers. He added that they had gathered information on non-payment of salaries from different working journalists of many newspapers and TV channels. Representatives of journalists also pointed out that government released dues of billions of rupees to media houses and despite taking written assurances from owners/managements of media houses that salaries of working journalists would be cleared from those dues, the same



was not done and the very existence of journalists is under severe threat now; their families don't have food to eat, their children have been expelled from schools and they don't even have money to buy medicine. They demanded that media house owners should be sensitized to pay all outstanding salaries immediately to provide much needed relief to media workers and families.

7. In response to questions from the Committee, Chairman PEMRA informed that for the last one and half year the issue of non-payment of salaries media workers has existed. He pointed out that PEMRA had no legal authority to resolve the issue of journalists' salaries nonetheless they took up the issue as a moral responsibility on humanitarian grounds and referred the matter to council of complaints. However TV Channels instead of paying salaries went to Sindh High Court, which passed a verdict that PEMRA had no legal power to intervene in this particular matter. At this, the Committee recommended that necessary amendments in primary and delegated legislation shall be brought to plug such legal loopholes. The Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information, while responded to the queries raised by the Committee, informed that the Prime Minister had taken the very first briefing from the Ministry on the issue of working journalists' issues and had urged the Ministry to take media workers, journalists and managements should be taken into confidence on government's vision for welfare and progress of media in the country. For improving legal framework vis-à-vis media, she sought support from the Committee because Parliament being the legislative body had the mandate to carry out law making. She also asserted that result oriented efforts were needed to establish a relationship between the Employer and Employee for the smooth and transparent employment in media sector. She also informed that the Ministry did not have any data regarding hiring and firing by private organizations, nor any service structure or salary details were available because many media workers were not hired under written contracts. She also informed that legislative proposals would be shared with the Committee in one month's time for its input and in the meantime the Ministry would continue working on development of real time database of viewer ratings of TV channels as well as circulation of newspapers so that advertisements are released based on actual merit and dummy publications are shunted out, which are usurping the legitimate advertisement rights of actual publications.

8. On being informed that approximately Rs.990 million advertisement dues of federal government organizations would be released to media houses in coming months, the Committee recommended that release of these dues be linked to payment of pending salaries of media workers. In the second meeting, accordingly, Secretary Information & Broadcasting briefed the



Committee that delays in payment of advertisement dues are caused by certain procedural requirements. He also dispelled the impression that payments are delayed intentionally or some media houses are banned. He added that issue of non-payment of salaries was multifaceted and the argument that it is caused only by delayed payments of government advertisements is misplaced because government advertisements are only a part of total revenue of newspapers and TV channels. Moreover, media houses started laying off employees and stopped salaries of others within the first month of formation of new government, at which time no so called reduction in government ads had taken place.


9. The President APNS and Chairman PBA said that if government clears the pending advertising dues of past one year, salaries of the working journalists can be cleared, they also suggested opening of a special assignment account for this purpose. They also said that they had no legal authority over member publications/TV channels to force them to payment of salaries however they can use their influence to sensitize the relevant media houses / newspapers. When SECP was asked to brief on the matter of registration of media houses and submission of their audited accounts showing their financial health and liabilities including payment of salaries to employees, the SECP representative expressed inability to give a clear picture on the issue because details of employees and staff regulations are not covered in the audited accounts submitted to SECP. They further informed that less than 50% media houses submitted their required statements within the stipulated time. The Committee expressed serious dissatisfaction with SECP for its inability to ensure compliance of submission requirements. At the same time, it was noted that no regulator or other government body had legal authority to ensure that employees of media organizations are treated fairly and given salaries in due time.

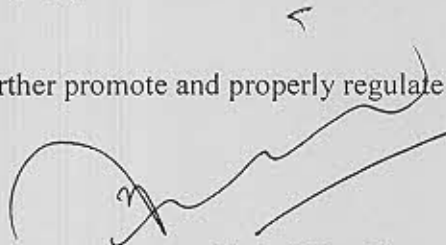
10. After detailed deliberations, the Committee decided to present this report in the House with following recommendations to address the issue of non-payment of salaries to working journalists and media workers:

- i. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting will run aggressive advertisement campaigns with special emphasis on public service messages and awareness creation.
- ii. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting will forthwith hold meetings with SECP to obtain data as to which media houses are incurring losses and tally the data so as to find out whether the media houses not paying salaries are in loss or otherwise.
- iii. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting will obtain lists from PRA, RIUJ and PFUJ of working journalists and other media workers whose salaries have not been paid.

Subsequently, the Ministry shall coordinate with APNS and PBA to ensure payment of salaries.

- iv. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting shall coordinate with relevant government bodies for processing and clearing all outstanding advertisement dues at the earliest possible, preferably in 45 working days, and ensure that payment of these dues is linked to payment of salaries to media workers.
- v. Media houses and newspapers shall immediately pay pending salaries of two months to all their employees whose salaries have been stopped since many months, without waiting for clearance of dues from the government.
- vi. It shall be ensured that daily wages and contract employees of media houses and newspapers have proper written hiring contracts so that not only their details are available but also to protect their due rights.
- vii. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and PEMRA shall submit legislative proposals at the earliest to plug loopholes and provide sufficient legal authority to ensure fair treatment of employees, timely payment of their salaries and compliance of rules & regulations in this regard.
- viii. Media shall be declared an industry to further promote and properly regulate it.


(Haris Rehman)
DS / Secretary Committee


(Senator Faisal Javed)
Chairman

Islamabad
The 3rd February 2020