

WAGE BOARDS

In the 1950s and 60s, when the organized labour sector was at a nascent stage of its development without adequate unionization or with trade unions without adequate bargaining power, Government in appreciation of the problems which arise in the arena of wage fixation due to absence of such bargaining power, constituted various Wage Boards. The Wage Boards are tripartite in character in which representatives of workers, employers and independent members participate and finalise the recommendations. The utility and contribution of such boards in the present context are not beyond question. Except for the Wage Boards for journalists and non-journalists newspaper and news-agency employees, which are statutory Wage Board, all other Wage Boards are non-statutory in nature. Therefore, recommendations made by these Wage Boards are not enforceable under the law.

2. The importance of the non-statutory Wage Boards has consequently declined over a period of time and no non-statutory Wage Board has been set up after 1966, except for sugar industry, where last such Wage Board was constituted in 1985. The trade unions, having grown in strength in these industries, are themselves able to negotiate their wages with the management. This trend is likely to continue in future.

3. The Working Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 (45 of 1955) (in short, the Act) provides for regulation of conditions of service of working journalists and non-journalists newspaper employees. The Section 9 and 13 C of the Act, inter-alia, provide for constitution of two Wage Boards for fixing or revising rates of wages in respect of working journalists and non-journalists newspaper employees, respectively. The Central Government shall, as and when necessary, constitute Wage Boards, which shall consist of

- (a) Three persons representing employers in relation to Newspaper Establishments;
- (b) Three persons representing working journalists for Wage Board under Section 9 and three persons representing non-Journalist newspaper employees for Wage Board under Section 13 C of the Act.
- (c) Four independent persons, one of whom shall be a person who is, or has been a judge of High Court or the Supreme Court, and who shall be appointed by the Government as the Chairman thereof.

4. Since 1955, the government has constituted 5 wage boards at regular intervals for the working journalists and non-journalist newspaper employees. The following table gives the details of the constitution of wage boards and other relevant details:

Constitution of Wage Boards for Working Journalists and Non-Journalists Newspaper Employees in the Past

S. N o.	Name of the Wage Board	Date of appointment of the Wage Board	Date on which final report was submitted to the Government	Date of acceptance of the recommendations by the Government	Remarks
I	Wage Board for Working Journalists	02-05-1956	NA	10-05-1957	-
II	(a) Wage Board for Working Journalists	12-11-1963	17-07-1967	27-10-1967	-
	(b) Wage Board for Non-Journalist Newspaper Employees	25-2-64	17-7-67	18-11-67	-
III	(a) Wage Board for Working Journalists	11-06-1975	13-08-1980	26-12-1980	Converted into one man Tribunals on 9 th February, 1979.
	(b) Wage Board for Non-Journalist Newspaper Employees	06-02-1976	13-08-1980	20-07-1981	
IV	Wage Boards for Working Journalists and Non-Journalist Newspaper Employees	17-07-1985	30-05-1989	31-08-1989	-
V	Wage Boards for Working Journalists and Non-Journalist Newspaper Employees	02-09-1994	25-07-2000	05-12-2000 and 15-12-2000	-

5. The last Wage Board, namely the Manisana Wage Board, was set up on 2nd September 1994, which submitted its report to the Government on 25th July, 2000. The Government accepted the recommendations of the Manisana Wage Board, and notified the same for implementation with minor modifications, vide notifications dated 5.12.2000 and 15.12.2000. The prime responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the Wage Board rests with the concerned State Governments / Union Territories under the provision of the Act.

6. The newspaper employees unions have been demanding constitution of fresh Wage Boards as more than 10 years have elapsed after the constitution of last Wage Board and they felt the last Wage Boards had not taken into consideration the boom in the newspaper sector on account of globalization and liberalization.

7. Although the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 does not say anything about the periodicity of constitution of Wage Boards, it was felt that the time was ripe for constitution of fresh Wage Boards as more than 10 years have elapsed since the last Wage Boards were constituted.

8. The Cabinet in its meeting held on 18.12.2006 approved the proposal for constitution of two Wage Boards, one for working journalists and another one for non-journalist newspaper employees, under Sections 9 and 13 C of the Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955. The Wage Boards have been given 3 years to submit their reports to the Government.

9. The present Wage Boards have been constituted vide Notification No.V-24040/3/2004-WB dated 24th May, 2007 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Justice K. Narayana Kurup, formerly Judge High Court of Kerala and Acting Chief Justice High Court of Madras. Sh. K.M.Sahni, former Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment has been appointed as full-time Member-Secretary of the Wage Boards. The Wage Boards have started functioning from Delhi. The Composition of the two Wage Boards is indicated in the relevant notifications.