

The 6th December, 2024.

No.IPR.34/2020/Pt./128. - Whereas the State Government, in recognition of the contribution of journalists towards society and acknowledging the constitutional obligation to safeguard the vulnerable, deemed it necessary to establish a welfare fund aimed at supporting indigent working journalists and veteran journalists within the State of Meghalaya, providing them with financial assistance.

Now, therefore, the Government of Meghalaya hereby is pleased to introduce the Meghalaya Journalists Welfare Scheme, 2024 for regulating the constitution, administration, and provisions of financial assistance to the working and veteran journalists which are as follows:-

1. **Short title and commencement.**

- (a) The Scheme shall be called 'Meghalaya Journalists Welfare Scheme 2024'.
- (b) It shall come into force with effect from 1st December, 2024.

2. **Definitions —** In this scheme, unless the context otherwise requires:

- i. "Committee" means the Committee constituted for the purpose of administration of the Fund under Clause-4.
- ii. "Fund" means the Meghalaya Journalists Welfare Fund.
- iii. "Journalist" means the Journalist as defined under the Meghalaya Press Accreditation Rules 1999.
- iv. "Veteran Journalist" means a Journalist who has served a minimum of twenty years as a Journalist, as defined above, and has been accredited by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya for a minimum of fifteen years during their service, and has attained the age of 60 years, and has not taken up any other gainful regular employment.

3. **Assistance available under the Scheme:**

- (a) Upto Rs. 5 (five) lakhs may be provided to the family under extreme hardship on account of death of the journalist. Financial assistance for the dependents of deceased journalists will be sanctioned in the following order of priority: spouse (widow or widower), mother, father, daughter under the age of 21, and son under the age of 21.
- (b) Upto Rs. 3 (three) lakhs may be provided to the journalist in case of permanent disability rendering the journalist incapable of earning a livelihood, subject to claims being made and supported by documents or certificates issued by the competent authority as deem fit and proper.
- (c) Upto Rs. 3 (three) lakhs may be provided towards the cost of treatment of major ailments such as cancer, renal failure, liver cirrhosis, heart ailments requiring by-pass/open heart surgery, angioplasty, brain haemorrhage and paralytic attack. This would be subject to the medical expenditure not being covered under Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme or any other insurance/departmental health schemes, etc. and claims made supported by Hospital Documents including Certificate in original duly verified, countersigned and sealed by the Director of Health Services (MI).
- (d) Upto Rs. 10,000/- (ten thousand) per month may be provided to the veteran journalists as special support as recommended by the Committee. Payments may be scheduled monthly or as determined by the committee, depending on fund availability. The committee will annually review

the list of beneficiaries and make recommendations. The journalists who are in receipt of any pension from Central or State Government are not eligible under this scheme.

4. **Constitution and Administration of the Fund.** - (i) The State Government shall appoint a Committee namely, Meghalaya Journalists Welfare Committee to administer the fund. The Committee shall consist of the following members namely:

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| (a) Principal Secretary/Commissioner & Secretary/Secretary Information & Public Relations Department. | - | Chairperson |
| (b) Director, Information & Public Relations | - | Member Secretary |
| (c) Joint Director/Deputy Director Information & Public Relations. | - | Member |
| (d) Financial Adviser, Information & Public Relations Department. | - | Member |
| (e) Director of Health Services (MI) | - | Member |
| (f) Four non-official members, preferably Senior Journalists within the state including the Representatives of Shillong Press Club and Meghalaya Editors & Publishers Association, Suggested by the Minister in charge of the Information & Public Relations Department. | - | Members |

- (ii) The Committee shall meet at such intervals, as may be necessary to consider proposals of fund.
- (iii) Term of the Committee shall be for a period of two years, provided, however, that the Committee will continue till it is reconstituted.
- (iv) Chairperson and four members present in the meeting of the Committee shall form a quorum.
- (v) The committee may issue guidelines and forms to ensure smooth operation of the scheme.

5. **Eligibility for availing assistance from the fund.**

- (a) The Journalist is a citizen of India.; and
- (b) The Journalist is ordinarily resident of the State by birth or by continuous residence for a period of not less than 10 years.; and
- (c) The Journalist is accredited with the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya.

6. **Procedure for the sanction from the fund.** - A proposal for assistance from the fund will be initiated by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya, with specific recommendation and supporting documents.

The recommendation will be considered and decided by the Committee. However, only in cases of urgency, decision may be taken with the approval of the Chairperson of the Committee and the same should be placed before the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Corpus and operation of the Fund.

- (a) The Meghalaya Journalists Welfare Fund shall draw its resources from State Government grants, monthly subscriptions from accredited journalists, contributions from Journalist Organizations, contributions from News Agencies based on their advertisement income, and contributions from other institutions/individuals, etc.
 - (b) The fund shall be administered by the Committee in accordance with its decisions. The Government's contribution shall ensure that a minimum amount of Rs. 35,00,000/- (Rupees thirty-five lakhs only) is maintained in the fund to fulfil the objectives of this Scheme. The fund will be provided/operated under the Development Budget of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Meghalaya.
 - (c) Payments shall be disbursed based on recommendations made by the committee, contingent upon fund availability. All payments shall be credited only to the beneficiary's account.
8. **Exception:** Notwithstanding anything contained in this Scheme or the guidelines, the Committee may, in exceptional cases, suggest a higher level of assistance, recommend assistance to non-accredited journalists, or propose any other deviation from the guidelines for the approval of the Minister in charge of the Information & Public Relations Department.
9. **Financial Assistance not a matter of right.** - Grant for financial assistance from the fund to any working journalists is not a matter of right. Assistance would be extended depending on the Committee's satisfaction regarding the eligibility/merit of the case and the financial resources available for the purpose. The Committee reserves the right to reject or accept any application without assigning any reason thereof.
10. **Repeal and Savings:-** (1) the Journalists' Welfare Scheme 2009 is hereby repealed.
- (2) Notwithstanding the repeal of the Scheme referred to in the sub-clause (1), it shall not affect:-
- (a) the previous operation of the Scheme so repealed, or anything duly done thereunder, or
 - (b) any right, privilege, obligation or liability acquired, accrued or incurred under the Scheme so repealed: and
 - (c) any such proceeding or remedy may be continued or enforced, and any such assistance may be made as if that Scheme had not repealed.
- (3) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done or any action taken under the said Scheme shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Scheme.

VIJAY KUMAR MANTRI,

Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya,
Information and Public Relations Department.