

Newspaper hawkers go on strike in Chandigarh

Newspaper hawkers in Chandigarh and the neighbouring towns of Panchkula and Mohali went on a strike Sunday to press their demand for higher commissions.

The hawkers in the three towns are also demanding an end to the practice of coupon system for paid-up subscription.

"No newspaper was distributed by hawkers in the entire tri-city Sunday. We will not do it (distribute papers) till our demands are met," Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali Hawkers' Union president Sushil Kumar said.

'All the newspapers are making huge profit but the poor hawkers are always at the receiving end. We are getting only around 40 paise per copy while we are demanding to raise this commission by 50 percent,' one hawker said.

The hawkers' union said it was talking to newspaper managements in the city to resolve the issue.

'We had given the May 31 deadline to all the newspapers to take appropriate steps in the favour of hawkers. But we didn't get any convincing response from them resulting in the mass strike. The stalemate can be an extended one,' Kumar added.

The circulation manager of The Tribune, one of the highest selling English dailies in the region, Rajeshwar Chopra said that newspaper managements were still in talks with the hawkers' unions to resolve the issue.

'It will be too early to comment on this as this is a very sensitive issue. We are still in conversation with the hawkers, and hopefully in the next 4-5 days reach on some solution,' he said.

To face the situation of readers going without newspapers, The Tribune is opening cash counters at several places in the city Monday to distribute newspapers.

Ajay Sharma, a Mohali resident, said, 'My day starts with a newspaper in my hand and I was shocked to learn about the strike. It's nonsensical on the part of newspaper owners that hawkers without whom they can't move even a single step are a discontented lot.'

'Our hawker was so regular - even in rains and storms. Not finding him and the paper Sunday was shocking,' Panjab University hosteller Amit Sharma said.

'I had to travel a good 9 km to get my copies of newspapers. I got them outside the PGI from a roadside vendor. It's really difficult for businessmen like us who have to keep a close watch on share market through newspapers,' chipped Arun Shah, a Panchkula based businessman.

The tri-city comprises a population of nearly 1.5 million people with Chandigarh alone accounting for nearly 1.1 million.

Chandigarh is a major publishing centre for newspapers in English, Hindi and Punjabi.

Leading newspapers being published from here include The Tribune, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar and nearly a dozen others.

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