

# State govt staff to strike work on June 2 over pay

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**M**angaluru: Peeved at state government's alleged apathy in considering their request for equal wages for equal work, nearly 5.10 lakh government employees from 84 departments have decided to resort to en masse absenteeism on June 2. The move, employees said, is a symbolic protest to draw the government's attention to their demand to set up a wage-revision committee that will help draw parity with the salary their counterparts in central government draw.

Prakash Nayak, president of Dakshina Kannada district unit of Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, said a state-wide agitation plan was drawn up in detail when the state executive committee of the association met here on April 5. Accordingly, the state unit of the association has served a strike notice to the state chief secretary on April 20, he said, adding the government has not responded to the demands in the notice as on date.

Wage disparity between central government employees and their state government counterparts has increased over the years. Nearly 24 state governments across India have already either drawn parity with wages their employees earn vis-a-vis central government employees or have bridged this gap significantly, he said, adding repeated representations to chief minister Siddaramaiah at various state government employee meets have only drawn empty assurances.

Citing an example, he said while a group D employee in central government gets total wages of Rs 30,000 per month, including a basic pay of Rs 21,000, his counterpart in Karnataka gets a total pay of Rs 15,000, including a basic pay of Rs 9,600. The number of government employees is 2.70 lakh less compared to the sanctioned strength of 7.80 lakh, he said. The government by way of outsourcing their work or not going in for new recruitments is saving Rs 8,500 crore each year.

With nearly 30,000 government employees expected to superannuate from services during the year, the work burden on

existing employees will only worsen, he said. With the state government introducing newer welfare schemes each year, the onus of implementing it successfully rests on the employees, he said. Many new employees who have joined through Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) recruitment have quit their jobs unable to put up with the pressure exerted on them by their seniors, he said.

The state unit has submitted relevant facts and figures to buttress their claims for parity in wages at pre-budget discussions held with the CM and senior government functionaries in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively. The wages of state government employees was last revised in 2012. The expected outgo to the government on account of wage revision is Rs 2,000 crore. This is a small amount compared to the Rs 1-lakh crore budget of the government, he said.