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Poorly paid imams may drag mosque trustees to Bombay high court

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MUMBAI: Dismayed at being poorly paid and treated shabbily, a section of imams in the city plan to approach the Bombay high court with pleas to act against mosque trustees. At a recent meeting at Islam Gymkhana in Marine Lines, called by NGO Social, Educational and Welfare Association (SEWA), several imams, muezzins and community leaders voiced the long-pending demand to increase the emoluments of imams.

Imams lead the prayers five times a day, while muezzins call out the azaan for the prayers. In most mosques, imams are paid less than Rs 10,000 a month, which is not enough to meet their expenses. "We are consulting some lawyers and may petition the high court soon to direct the state wakf board and charity commission to fix a respectable amount as our

salary. Trustees of most mosques keep imams poorly paid and vulnerable. Imams are hired and fired at the will of the trustees," said Maulana Khalilur Rahman Noorie, president of the imam organisation Tanzeem Imae Masajid.

SEWA's president Advocate Yusuf Abrahni lashed out at mosque trustees who turn a blind eye to the miserable condition of imams. "Mosques are becoming air-conditioned, but imams and muezzins remain impoverished. Responding to my audio-video messages to improve the lot of imams...many mosques have increased their salaries. But a lot more needs to be done," he said.

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Senior cleric and trustee of a mosque in Grant Road, Maulana Moin Ashraf Qadri (Moin Mian) said the monthly salary of the mosque's imam had increased to Rs 25,000 from a princely sum of Rs 4,000. He added that imams should create awareness about their miserable condition through talks and sermons. At the same meeting, Rajya Sabha MP and a member of the state wakf board Hussain Dalwai had suggested imams and muezzins should "stop work" to force mosque trustees to meet their demands.