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LKS, JurisCorp do increments, bonus • AZB, Luthra do bonus, freezes, welcome freshers

By Legally India • Thursday, 12 November 2020 15:24 • Law firms An estimated 4 minute read...

As the novel coronavirus is gearing up for a second wave and wreaking renewed havoc in much of the world and economies continue teetering on brinks barely held back by government stimulus packages, a number of law firms have recently eased restrictions on their fee-earners.

Albeit slightly later than usual, [Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan \(LKS\)](#) and [JurisCorp](#) have paid out bonuses and announced the normally routine annual fixed pay increments in line with post-qualification experience (PQE) levels.

At LKS, bonus payments and increments are normally announced around June, with increments paid in arrears from April.

This year both were announced in November, we understand from authoritative sources.

JurisCorp too has announced the normally-routine pay increments as well as having now paid out annual bonuses for the 2019-20 financial year.

The firm said in a statement that “in the wake of a global pandemic outbreak, Juris Corp managed to weather the blow ensuring full payments to all the lawyers and staff all through the year”, adding:

Adapting to the “New Now”, the firm’s members have shown remarkable resolve and resilience by attuning to robust technology, ensuring seamless delivery of work. This in turn has resulted in client requirements being met with efficiently. The Firm appreciates all its members for quickly adapting to the changed environment and demonstrating great teamwork, where working from home throws up its fair share of challenges and pressure.

Juris Corp co-founder Talat Shah commented in a press statement: “Our people have put in a lot of efforts inspite of the current challenging times. In light of the same, Juris Corp is committed to act in the best interest of our people.”

Juris Corp partner Pratih Kumar added: “These are uncertain times. Our workforce has been a critical part of our success. We like to reward our people for their stellar performance and support to the firm even during these difficult times.”

L&L: One bonus tranche but no increments

Yesterday, [L&L Partners](#) too has issued a press release stating that it had paid out bonuses across offices:

L&L Partners, formerly Luthra & Luthra Law Offices, has made bonus payouts across its offices pan-India today - all corporate counsels received pre-agreed bonuses, despite the impact of COVID19. All support staff also received their full annual payouts on time, before Diwali.

But we understand from several sources that annual fixed pay has been frozen and has not been incremented, though a spokesperson said today: "I believe the increments are still being considered. I also understand some increments are being announced today."

Regarding the bonuses, the story is a bit more complicated.

We had reported in March 2020 that L&L had [paid its year-end bonuses slightly early due to the pandemic](#).

And we understand according to an internal announcement, that (potentially former) senior partner Mohit Saraf had announced another bonus tranche that was paid around 9 September 2020.

However, this latest announced November bonus payment only applies to partners and managing associates.

According to multiple internal sources, the L&L bonus structure entails amounts disbursed several times per year up to a maximum bonus cap based on the PQE level of a fee earner.

The system is not entirely straightforward.

Associates and senior associates usually get paid up to 50% of their yearly maximum bonus cap in March, with the remainder paid in another tranche between July and September after appraisals.

Managing associates and partners get their bonuses paid in four tranches per year, however.

In any case, the current bonus payment would have been previously announced and not discretionary, as having been committed by the firm to be paid to fee-earners after the appraisals from July to September.

We understand that some of the ratios have also been tweaked downwards slightly this year.

L&L had recently also [announced that fresher joining dates](#), which had been pushed to 2021 due to the crisis, would be joining this month.

AZB: Welcomes 50 freshers virtually, pays bonuses but no increments

AZB & Partners had recently also paid out bonuses, though increments and base salaries have also been frozen this year amidst the continuing uncertainty.

But good news for AZB freshers. "We welcome the batch of 2020 to AZB & Partners," the firm had announced on Linked-in around two weeks ago with a [lovely and popular](#) graphic of all young joiners (see below). "We have on boarded 39 Associates in Mumbai, 2 in Bangalore and 9 in Delhi."

While only having just formally joined, training had started as early as July, however.

“Even though the joining date was delayed due to the pandemic, we wanted to ensure that the freshers don’t feel excluded from the firm,” said AZB [knowledge management partner](#) Bhavi Sanghvi. “So from July onwards, we organised bespoke learning sessions (like FEMA, structuring, legal writing, etc) for the freshers which received an overwhelmingly positive response from them.”

Much like at other firms - such as [Khaitan & Co](#) and [J Sagar Associates \(JSA\)](#) - that have managed to induct freshers (albeit late), AZB has relied heavily on technology to make it happen.

“We used technology effectively to seamlessly integrate the freshers with the firm, be it remotely setting up their workspaces, online knowledge sessions, formal teams sessions or social catch ups,” AZB chief operating officer (COO) Eshan Sharma explained about how freshers were brought on board virtually.

He added: “We used a mix of remote desktop application, Zoom & [Microsoft] Teams for an efficient virtual onboarding. Other than meeting other lawyers in person, the joining has been as smooth and effective as the pre-pndemic times.”