



Free Expression

A Monthly Newsletter of Freedom Forum

Vol 2/ Issue 2, February, 2008



▲ Distinguished persons and other guests at the inaugural session of six-day court reporting training organized by Freedom Forum on February 6, 2008.

Chief Justice for Coordinated Court and Press

Chief Justice Kedar Prasad Giri has stressed on the need for the judges and media persons to honor each other's norms so as not to endanger the independence of a citizen.

At a six-day training to journalists organized by the Freedom Forum, with the objective of enhancing the quality of court reporting and consolidating the mutual relation between independent judiciary and press, he said they should take proper information on their each other's norms and concepts.

Former President of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Harihar Birahi said the situation to face cases of contempt of court while writing news on incidents directly related to court should improve.

Ex-attorney Badri Bahadur Karki said court news have been in shadows for lack of knowledge of writing such news. Former President of Nepal Bar Association (NBA) Shambhu Thapa said journalists writing news on court should verify whether or not the decision has incorporated justice and law.

Nepal Press Institute Chairman Gokul Pokhrel said such training increases capacity of the journalists.

Chairman of the organizing body Taranath Dahal said the rule of law will not be promoted if the justice sector and press do not honor each other and

it will make informing of the court actions to the people easier. He said the forum will encourage journalists writing good news in the judicial sector.

Supreme Court (SC) Justice duo Kalyan Shrestha and Balaram KC, Forum Chairman Dahal, Press Council Chairman Rajendra Dahal, journalist Harihar Birahi, Deputy Attorney General Drona Raj Regmi, advocate Ram Krishna Nirala provided training on various issues of court, court and media, freedom of expression, contempt of court, right to information and other.

Likewise, Director of American Library Prakash Thapa, Santosh Sigdel, Srikrishna Bhattarai and Dharmendra Jha also involved in facilitating the training.

The organization has so far trained 82 journalists of Kathmandu, Pokhara, Dhankuta and Dang in legal journalism and has imparted training this time to 18 journalists working in Kathmandu.

The Importance of Media Freedom

It is recognised everywhere that media play vital role in protecting democracy and its institutions. The media are in the best position to investigate and report the issues of public importance and interest. Indeed, the larger sections of people do have access to information and gain knowledge on various subjects outside their day-to-day lives through media.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the freedom of expression of media be ensured and protected. Media actors, such as journalists and editors, should be able to exercise their own right to freedom of expression. This is an essential precondition for the realisation of the right of every member of society to seek and receive information from a wide range of sources, another aspect of the right to freedom of expression

The importance of freedom of the media has been stressed by

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You can't have real newspapers without democracy, and you don't have democracy without newspapers
– Alexis de Tocqueville

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Message from the Chairperson

The assurance of unobstructed exercise of freedom of expression and opinion is the first major foundation of functional democracy. And second is undoubtedly the election. Then only the congenial environment could be made to pave the way for guaranteeing other civil rights. Aspiration of general public for lasting peace, progress and development could not be materialized by limiting democratic in paper, but is only possible by enabling and empowering it in real ground. Now we are passing through a critical juncture of building democracy. The country has engulfed into the election and is going to constitute the assembly of people's representatives for making a constitution thereby expediting ahead our democracy process. The relevance and significance of the election hinges on the level of people's participation and response. There should be no obstacles and obstructions in the competition to take place in the election so as to ensure broad-based participation of people. It is so far the most crucial opportunity for people to build and express their views. A favorable environment is a most to impart views and opinions freely at the moment.

But it was found quite reverse during the month of February. Journalists and various media had to come across two-fold suppression in the Madhesi movement. The protestors also threatened and exerted pressure on journalists to write and make publicity of their agitation while the government security bodies also barred and manhandled journalists in field. Likewise, the internal dispute surfaced between the political parties in various parts of the country has also caused disruption in public meeting and assembly. It was reported that mainly the cadres of CPN (Maoist) and its youth wing YCL disallowed other political parties to express their opinion and to organize public gathering despite the mother party's commitment to mainstream politics. It has been a sheer ignorance of healthy democratic culture.

People can not cast vote fairly when the freedom of opinion and expression is curtailed. The election that takes place amidst pressure and suppression could not indicate genuine and valid people's opinion. Therefore, the continuity of such situation could not be agreeable and should not be at any cost. Hopefully, the agreement signed between seven-party ruling government and agitating Madhes and other caste and region-based groups will lay foundation to facilitating peaceful ambience for free politics. The Maoist will also pay its attention towards orienting its party cadres, who have not freed from their anarchic working style, to bring to democratic norms and values accompanied by healthy competition. Thus, there will exist an open environment where all types of views in the country get established in a just manner and free expression of people guaranteed. Besides, the professional media workers and media who have shouldered up the responsibility of facilitating peoples' right to rightly informed will witness an environment where they could work freely in an unabated manner.

Tara Nath Dahal
Chairperson



▲ Journalists at RTI Act analysis launching programme held on Feb. 1 in Kathmandu.

Nepal: RTI Act Analysed

ARTICLE 19, Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and FREEDOM FORUM released their analysis of the Nepalese Right to Information Act 2007 on Feb. 1. The adoption of the Act last year was an important step in giving practical effect to the Interim Constitution's guarantee of the right to information. The Act is generally a progressive piece of legislation. At the same time, we (ARTICLE 19, FNJ and FREEDOM FORUM) have several recommendations to bring the law into line with better international standards and practices. The Right to Information Act grants every Nepali citizen the right to access information held by public bodies. We welcome, among other things, the fact that the Act specifically places an obligation on public bodies to respect and promote the citizens' right to information and provides for an independent National Information Commission. Nevertheless, the Act has several shortcomings, including the following:

- It is limited in scope to citizens rather than applying to everyone.
- The information request procedures require applicants to submit reasons for their requests, which is not only contrary to international standards but also potentially places the burden of proof on the applicant.
- It lacks an override providing for the disclosure of even exempt information where this is in the overall public interest.
- Parliament and civil society groups should have greater input in appointing members of the National Information Committee.
- The National Information Committee should be given a wider promotional mandate to foster implementation of the law.
- The law should provide protection for whistleblowers, individuals who release information on wrongdoing. ARTICLE 19, FNJ and FF urge the Nepalese authorities to take steps to redress these problems, including through the adoption of regulations which provide for positive interpretation of the RTI Act.



Media Attack and Violence: February Glimpses

The turbulent situation in Tarai caused by series of strikes, blockade and closure during February Madhes Movement has brought about serious setback and atrocities to journalists and media workers. Journalists had to experience a very tough time in February while discharging their duty in various parts of the country. The brutal beating, blatant attack, burning down the copies of newspaper, detonating bombs and vandalism of vehicles owned by journalists as well as media house are the major insensitive works carried out against Nepali journalism during February. The situation has indicated the rising insecurity among journalists and uncertainty in the sector. It does not only influence the promotion of journalism freely, but also downplays the people's right to freedom of expression and information.

Freedom Forum has recorded 4 cases of threat, 5 cases of manhandle, 8 cases of misbehavior, one loot while 8 vandalism cases, one arrest and 9 cases of attack have been reported during the month of February. The data and information have been gathered from a wide range of sources including print and electronic media, press release, official statements, personal contacts, our loose network and other formal and informal sources.

Freedom Forum as an organization dedicated to the promotion of press freedom, human rights and democracy has continuously voiced its concerns and condemned the incidents of the violation of press freedom and freedom of expression at national and international level; drawn the attention of the sides concerned and demanded legal actions against the perpetrators. Moreover, we have been regularly updating national and international media about such violations and lobbying for the assurance of press freedom so as to garner public opinion and support from media persons and organizations around the world.

Attrocities against Press

Jhalak Gaire, President of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Banke Chapter, Janak Nepal, correspondent of Kantipur national daily and Subodh Tharu of Nepal Television were attacked by cadres of United Democratic Madhesh Front (UDMF) and Federal Republic National Front (FRNF) on February 17, Sunday at Banke, Nepalgunj, a mid-Western region of Nepal.

According to Jaya Narayan Sah, Ex-secretary of FNJ, Banke, the group of UDMF misbehaved journalists and stopped them to cover news and take photo of the clash taking place between the protestors and police force in Tribhuvannagar. They sustained minor injury in the incident. The clash erupted when the local administration stopped the demonstrators who were marching towards District Land Reform Office and Survey Division to disrupt the official works, he added.

According to National News Agency (RSS), the cadres of UDMF on February 17 burnt the copies of more than half national daily newspapers in various parts of the country. The protestors burnt the copies of these newspapers accusing them of twisting the news story related to Madhesh movement in Parasi.

Citing these newspaper have been working against the sentiment and spirit

of Madhesh and Madheshi people, they torched the newspaper copies of Kantipur National Daily, Naya Bhawana Daily published from Butwal, Jana Sangharsha Daily, Naya Satta Daily, Lumbini Daily and Mechikali Daily.

Likewise, a security personnel on February 13 attacked news correspondent of Janaki FM, Ganesh Sah at Golbazar, Siraha district. Sah was attacked by personnel of Armed Police Force at a time he was covering the news of the clash between cadres of Madheshi Morcha and the police force evening. Sah has succumbed to injury on his head with 7-8 stitches and is underwent treatment at Lahan hospital.

Similarly, Gokul Shrestha, reporter and Amrit Bhatta, cameraperson of Sagarmatha Television were attacked by a mob on 15 February at Bhaktapur, Sallaghari, a neighboring district of capital city Kathmandu.

A group of assailants attacked journo duo while they were covering news about the protest rally carried out by locals against the police's soft treatment towards Mike Deula and

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Journalist Thrashed

An unidentified group vandalized the motorbike belonging to Brij Raj Kusawaja, a news reporter for Kalika FM at Bhutaha of Nawalparasi district along the Mahendra highway at around 5 pm on 3 February.

A group of assailants manhandled him first and vandalized his motorbike charging the media of disseminating news in favour of bandh organizer.

Joint Madhesi Front has organized 3-day bandh from February 3 demanding the autonomous Madhes.

The group attacked him calling him of Madheshi community even after he showed the press card while he was going to cover the news of bandh, according to Chandani Hamal, News In-charge of Kalika FM.

Madan Thakur 'Dhananjaya', working committee member of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Rautahat chapter was beaten up and manhandled by Armed police at hospital road, Gaur, district headquarters of Rautahat on February 22, Friday in course of collecting news on the protest rally organized by United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF).

The police thrashed him while he was collecting news of the scuffle that took place between the police and cadres of UDMF at a time when helicopter carrying election materials was landing at the District Election Office, Rautahat., according to Prem Chandra Jha, President of Federation of Nepali Journalist (FNJ), Rautahat chapter. Journalist Thakur sustained injury in his leg.

The clash between protestors and police continued for an hour.

Likewise, the police raided home of Shailendra Jha, a general member of FNJ without any prior information and beat up his twelve-year son Prem Chandra Jha while he was studying at his room.

FLSC Cadres ablaze Kantipur Vehicle and Newspapers

Cadres of Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) set ablaze a vehicle belonging to Kantipur Publications at Laxminagar road section in Jhapa, eastern district of Nepal on February 20 Wednesday morning.

About 15 FLSC activists burnt down the vehicle at 5 AM in the morning in protest of the news published in the Kantipur daily that had led to the arrest of FLSC activists. They had also burnt 8,000 copies of Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post dailies. FLSC men first sprinkled petrol on the vehicle and set it on fire, according to the driver of the vehicle.

The vehicle (Ba 3 Cha 3933) carrying Wednesday's edition of the Kantipur daily and The Kathmandu Post was bound for Birtamod from Biratnagar. FLSC activists also took driver Hom Moktan and distributor Gangaram Bhandari under control before they torched the vehicle. The driver of the vehicle informed that the activists looted mobile phones belonging to him and distributor. The activists had been planning attack since Thursday night and blocked the road, said witness.

Meanwhile, a rally of journalists went around Birtamod Bazaar chanting slogans demanding the stoppage of suppressing the media and withdrawal of indefinite bandh. The journalists took out rally so as to express their protest on the rising attack and misbehavior meted out against journalists.

Earlier FLSC Chairman Kumar Lingdel committed to not bring about any harms and difficulties to journalists and persons involved in media sector. ■

All Dailies and Weeklies Published From Jhapa Closed Down

The publication of all daily and weekly newspapers published from Jhapa district have been closed down from February 22, Friday for an indefinite period owing to the general strike taking place in the eastern districts of Nepal since February 13.

Altogether seven dailies and ten weeklies have been published from Jhapa district alone. A gathering of the editors of these newspapers decided to shut down publishing the newspapers citing the reason of lack of publishing materials and obstruction in distribution system.

The daily newspapers closed in the district are Arjun Dhara, Bibechna, Purbanchal, Jana Sambad, Mechi Times, and Purba Sandesh and the weeklies are Jana Andolan, Swadhin Sambad, Naulo Aawaz, Malika, Gaunka khabar, Barun, Saajha Manch, Peoples Time, Naya Kamana and Swatantra Jana Awaz.

'The cadres of agitating groups in the district did not allow us to distribute newspapers and obstruct the supply of publishing materials. Vehicles have been closed and distribution of newspapers was halted due to the effect of bandh. It resulted in the stopping of editions of newspaper', said President of Federation of Nepali Journalist (FNJ), Jhapa chapter Krishna Humagain. ■

Journalists Threatened in Kapilvastu

The cadres of United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) threatened Krishna Dhakal, Editor of Kapilvastu Sandesh Weekly and Annapurna Post's Kapilvastu district correspondent of taking life.

Journalist Dhakal was threatened for not covering the news regarding Madhesi demands and issues and helping local administration to suppress their agitation taking place since February 13.

The agitators banned the newspapers published from Kapilvastu district, obstructed its distribution all over the district and misbehaved journalists several times following their bandh call.

The irate cadres also vandalized the motorcycle possessed by Chairman of Revolutionary Journalists Association (RJA), Kapilvastu CP Sharma and imposed indecent manner while he was going to collect news.

Likewise, Secretary of FNJ, Kapilvastu district Chapter Megh Raj Nepal was also warned of taking life by the protestors in Kapilvastu on February 11. ■

Newspaper Resumption

The news papers in Jhapa district, which were closed down for the last five days, have resumed their publication from Feb. 26.

'In keeping with the momentum of Constituent Assembly (CA) elections following the nomination filed by the candidates for the first-past-the-post election system and urge of general public, we have resumed the publication of all newspapers', said President of Federation of Nepali journalists (FNJ), Jhapa Chapter Krishna Humagain.

The meeting of editors of the newspapers in Jhapa that took place on February 25 decided to bring the print including other necessary materials from Indian market to resume the publications with the assistance of Local Administration of Jhapa.

The cadres of FLSC are still hindering the newspaper distribution system, the closure of shops and obstruction caused to the vehicular movement in villages and towns have further worsened the situation, thereby dwindling the publication and distribution of newspapers in Jhapa, added Humagain. ■



Journalists Attacked and Misbehaved

Journalists in various parts of the country have been attacked and misbehaved while collecting news regarding the Tarai protest taking place since February 11 and the process of filing nomination for the Constituent Assembly (CA) election under first-past-the-post election system Monday.

Iswari Paudel, district-based corespondent of the Annapurna Post and editor of Mahottari News Weekly was ruthlessly beaten up by armed police at Jaleswor district headquarter of Mohottari on February 18.

Ganesh Sah, a journalist for New Jwarbhata, a weekly published from Lahan and a reporter for Janaki FM at Janakpur was ruthlessly beaten up by the police at around 12 noon while he reached at District Election Office, Siraha to collect news on the nomination being filed by the candidates of various political parties.

Journalist Sah was misbehaved as per the order issued by Superintendent of Police (SP) for writing news on police involvement on marijuana smuggling and police protection to smugglers, according to the President of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Siraha chapter and Central Chairman of Madhes Media Mission Dineshwar Gupta. Earlier too, Sah sustained serious injury in his head with the baton of police on February 13, the first day of Madhes bandh called by United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF), he added.

Likewise, Arjun Thapaliya, a for Ujyalo Network was chased away by police and Ram Babu Yadav, a cameraperson of Image Television was barred to click photos of the clash erupted between the cadres of UMDF and the police when the nomination process was taking place in the election office, Siraha. The police chased the journalists around the office saying 'we do not know who the journalists are, you can not cause anything'

Likewise, Pramodh Patel, a Birgunj-based journalist was also threatened by the police of shoot out while he was taking photo of police suppression over protestors in Birgunj on Friday, according to Chandra Kishor Jha.

Ram Pradesh Chaudhary, a journalist for Singhath Daily was manhandled by the police nearby Ghantaghar in Birgunj while another local journalist Firoj Khan was also thrashed by the police accusing him of protesting the raid the police carried out in his neighbor house some three days back. The police also had split up the curfew pass carried by Ram Kumar Sunal, a journalist for Sahara Newspaper into pieces on the way to collect news on the protest taking place in Tarai districts. Similarly journalists are obstructed and had faced difficult situation while carrying news on the filing of nominations in various other districts.

Journalist Top Raj Sharma was looted in Butwal on February 15. Likewise, Journalist Ram Bhaws Yadav of Siraha was attacked on Feb. 16. ■

Attack on Media House

A group of people on February 3 attacked on Narayani Today published from Birgunj, Parsa, located at the central region of Nepal.

The newspaper office was vandalized citing for twisting news regarding the three people killed in police action. Police had called them as members of Indian criminal gang while the group had denied this statement.

The irate mob also damaged the infrastructure and set fire on official documents. The publication of the newspaper remained closed for indefinite time owing to the tense situation following the incident.

Bomb Blast in Singhanath Daily

A bomb was detonated in the office of Singhanath Daily, a newspaper published in Hindi language from Birgunj, district headquarters of Parsa by an unidentified group at around 7.15 PM on Feb. 26. The blast has not caused any damages to the office.

No group has claimed the responsibility of the blast yet. The group hurled bomb at the office using the roof of another house at the north side, said President of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Parsha Chapter Satrugan Nepal.

The situation of journalism in Birgunj is worsening day by day due to the situation that Birgunj remained closed for 31 days since January 15, 2008, said Nepal. 'Journalists are used and divided that aggravated attack on this sector as a whole and the journalism as such a profession has remained at stake in Birgunj', he added.

Likewise, the publication of Jana Pratibimba, a daily published from Birgunj has closed down from February 27 owing to the financial crisis and inadequate advertisement source caused by the series of bandh and strike.

Mofasal

- Two radios, including Reshunga Pvt. Ltd at Tamghas, headquarters of Gulmi district and Pokhara community radio in Gandaki went on test broadcast.
- Purbanchal community radio established on the initiative of women has started its transmission recently in Biratnagar. The FM can be heard at the frequency of 104.4 mega hertz.
- Journalists Megh Raj Sharma and Jhapendra Gaire have been felicitated for their special contribution in the promotion of journalism outside the Kathmandu valley. The Mechikali Media Society, Palpa on February 15 honored journalists.

- Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala gave away Nona Journalism Award to Subas Dhakal, Editor of *Saptahik* and *Nari* on February 15. The award instituted by Press Union, Morang bags a cash of Rs. 10,000.
- Journalists Sushil Gautam and Ram Prasad Poudel have been provided with Journalism Genius Award instituted by Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Dang chapter while Narayan Prasad Sharma Journalism Genius Award was given away to Udaya GM, Gokul Genius Award to Basundhara Gautam Journalism Genius Award instituted by senior journalist Khaga Raj Lohani to Chuma Acharya.



▲ Journalists and political party leaders taking part in a round-table discussion on constitutional guarantee of freedom of press and freedom of expression in Kathmandu on Feb. 1, Friday.

Freedom of Press and of Expression in CA Election Manifesto

A round-table discussion was held here today to know the views of the political parties regarding the provisions they will put forth through constituent assembly election manifesto for the constitutional guarantee of freedom of press and freedom of expression.

At the programme jointly organized by Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Freedom Forum and Article 19, political parties highlighted the significant role played by Nepali media in the establishment of democracy and expressed commitment on behalf of their parties to guaranteeing press freedom, right to information and human rights. They recommended that press being the shield of democracy should publish and disseminate news in an impartial and objective manner and remain sensitive towards nationality, race and religion while covering news and views.

Chief Whip of CPN (Maoist) Dinanath Sharma said that the press freedoms of protection of human rights are the indicators of the advancement of democracy in any country. Central Member of CPN-UML Shanker Pokharel stressed the need of translating the commitment expressed towards freedom of press and expression into practice.

Nepali Congress's Lokesh Dhakal said that the fundamentals of press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information should be incorporated in democratic norms and values.

Dilaram Acharya of Rastriya Janamorcha underlined the need to scale up domestic investment in the area of information and press curtailing foreign investment and to ensure

environment for the safety and security of journalists.

Shedding light on the objective and rational of the programme, Chairman of Freedom Forum and National News Agency (RSS) Tara Nath Dahal said that the law should bind the press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information enshrined in the interim constitution, political parties should come up with clear and concrete policy regarding the investment in the media and the state should ensure protection to the media at maximum level.

FNJ Chairman Bishnu Nisthuri said that the Federation has treated all political parties in an equal manner in terms of disseminating news and views.

Shyamananda Suman of Madhesi People's Right Forum (MPRF) stressed that the attitude of attack on media should be stopped and the state should protect the media and media persons.

Speaking at the programme, Terai Madhesh Democratic Party (TMDP)'s Brishesh Chandra Lal, Manish Kumar Suman of Nepal Sadvhabana Party and Bishnu Raj Aryal of CPN-ML said that the media should stop expressing biased news and affecting personal life and should disseminate news of Madhesh in an equal way.

On the occasion, FNJ vice-chairman Shiva Gaunle, general secretary Mahendra Bishta, journalists Gopal Thapaliya, Madan Dhakal, Bipul Pokharel and Nepal Representative of Article 19 Santosh Sigdel demanded with the political parties to categorically mention the provisions in their election manifesto for the constitutional guarantee of press freedom, right to information, freedom of expression. ■

12 more TV channels in pipeline

Indefinite bandas, chakkajams and curfews have taken a continuous toll on Nepali industry. Figures show that there has been no significant industrial growth as the country is still reeling under unstable political conditions even after the end of the decade-long Maoist insurgency. However, the media industry, which in itself largely depends on other industries, is booming in Nepal.

Newspapers and FM radio stations are already in their thousands and hundreds respectively in the country. Latest statistics show that now it is the television industry's turn and Nepali society is entering the televisual age with a vengeance. According to the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC), there are a dozen more satellite TV channels in the pipeline. Many of them are preparing to reach the market within months.

Seven TV channels — Nepal Television (NTV), NTV-2, Kantipur Television, Image, Channel Nepal, Avenues, and Sagarmatha — are already in operation. Nepal 1, though not registered in Nepal, is one more channel run for Nepali audiences. Image Channel has bought the license of Shangri-La Satellite Television and has been using it for satellite transmissions. Almost all the TV channels in operation so far in the country are largely based on news and current affairs.

Media promoters have been concentrating on news-oriented channels as on average over 60 percent of the total revenue comes from advertisements aired during news and current affairs, according to Ranjeet Acharya, Chief Executive Officer of Prisma Advertising.

Transmission charges for television channels seeking a license range from Rs 350,000 for 500 watt capacity to Rs 1.2 million for 10 KW.

New satellite channels in pipeline

- ↘ Newslite Pvt Ltd, Kathmandu,
- ↘ National TV Network, Kathmandu
- ↘ Uplink International, Kathmandu
- ↘ Everest TV Network, Kathmandu
- ↘ Bodhigram, Kathmandu
- ↘ SK TV, Lalitpur
- ↘ Nobel Broadcasting, Kathmandu
- ↘ Citizen TV, Kathmandu
- ↘ Moonlight TV, Kathmandu
- ↘ Tarai Media Network, Birgunj
- ↘ ABC TV, Kathmandu
- ↘ Namaste Nepali TV Network, Kathmandu

Posted on: 2008-02

Source: The Kathmandu Post, February 28



Statement by Chief Justice Kedar Prasad Giri on Judiciary and Press

The timely amendment has taken place in the concept and content of law at par with the occurrence of development interventions that have been influencing all spheres of human life for the last few years. It has been a strenuous challenge for legal practitioners and others involving in the sector to have comprehensive understanding on the subjects and issues of law. In keeping this essence, capacity enhancing programme are imperative for all journalists working in the area concerning law, judicial works and legal sector.

We are working at a time when, the concept of civil freedom and accountable government has received prime importance. In the context of Nepal, we are at the sensitive moment to work affiliating the guarantee of human rights and civil freedom with transitional justice owing to the circumstances of the country. There has been a responsibility among both the journalists and judicial workers to forge an effective and efficient mechanism to expedite these works ahead. The two mechanisms which are set-up with the same objective have their own norms and values. We are aware from our experience that if both sector failed to adhere to the principles of one another, it would cause loss to the both, moreover bringing the situation of civil freedom at stake. Hence, the mediapersons and judicial workers should be well-aware about the norms and values, concept and conducts of one another. In this context, I feel the court-reporting training being organized on the initiative of Freedom Forum since sometime back has established its essence and relevance.

It is essential that the media sector which has remained as the fourth estate of the state should keep vigil and evaluate actions of court in a regular way. But such works are to be carried out within the parameter of judicial freedom and constitution of the country. If we go through the past one year, both sour and sweet comments have come to public regarding the relation between media and judiciary. I think that it has offered an opportunity for both sides to review their own working styles.

Currently, the Supreme Court (SC) has taken an initiative to prepare communication policy of judiciary by holding interaction with media workers. I am firmly confident that the functional relation between judiciary and media sector could be built easier, harmonious and result-oriented if the policy was moulded to a final-shape and implementation took place accordingly.

The recommendation and co-operation from media sector will have wider significance and will be acknowledging in this regard. ■

Fellowship Granted

Freedom Forum has granted writing fellowship to five mid-career working journalists on court reporting. The selection is based on the merits of proposal submitted by applicants among the participants who took part in law-beat reporting training held at Ghorai of Dang from January 14-18, 2008.

The candidates selected for the fellowship are Madhu Sudan Bhattarai (Radio Swargadwari/Gorakshya Daily,

Dang), Lal Bahadur Aire (National News Agency, Dadeldhura), Hem Raj Sharma (Radio Indreni FM, Dang), Rupa Gahatraj (Radio Bheri Awaaz, Nepalgunj) and Balam Pandey (Dinesh FM, Kailali/Abhiyan Weekly, Mahendranagar).

Earlier, Freedom Forum has provided fellowship to 15 journalists under Strengthening Media through Legal Support programme. ■

The importance of...

international courts. The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) stated:

[T]he free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives is essential. This implies a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion.

The European Court of Human Rights has noted that the media as a whole merit special protection, in part because of their role in making public "information and ideas on matters of public interest. Not only does [the press] have the task of imparting such information and ideas: the public also has a right to receive them. Were it otherwise, the press would be unable to play its vital role of 'public watchdog'."

Attrocities against...

his father, who had allegedly killed Krishna Prasad Suwal of Ward 14 of Bhaktapur on Wednesday night. The protesters burnt down the motorbike used by the duo and broke the camera carried by Bhatta.

Arjun Chhetri, vice-president of FNJ, Dhanusha Chapter was attacked by an unidentified group with sharp knife (Khukuri) at Bhanuchowk on February 16, Saturday while he was heading to cover news.

Police on February 12 arrested local journalist Rabin Paudel, sub-editor of Tanahun Awaz weekly for allegedly involved on vandalizing the house of Raghu Nath Paudel, Tanahun district president of Nepali Congress.

An unidentified group on February 13 detonated bomb in the house of journalist Meghraj Sigdel, Treasurer of Federation of Nepalese journalists (FNJ), Bardiya Chapter and District President of Revolutionary Journalists Association (RJA). The socket bomb that went off Wednesday evening caused damages in the walls of the houses. Defense Army, an agitating attack against press freedom and freedom of expression. ■

Murder and Attack on Journalists in the World during February

Senior Journalist Killed by Separatist Group in Pakistan:

A journalist was killed in a Pakistan border town. Dr. Abdus Samad Chishti Mujahid, a photographer and columnist for the Urdu-language weekly magazine "Akhbar-e-Jehan", was fatally shot on 9 February by a gunman in Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan province, which borders Afghanistan.

According to IFJ and RSF, six journalists were murdered in Pakistan in 2007, making the country one of the most dangerous for the press last year.

Junta Continues to Attack Media in Burma

Thet Zin and Sein Win Aung, the editor and office manager of the magazine "Myanmar Nation", were arrested on 15 February and are being detained without charge. Police carried out a search of their office and confiscated documents, including a copy of UN Special Rapporteur Paula Sergio Pinheiro's report on Burma, and material on the September protests in Rangoon.

"Burma's military regime has once again shown its intolerance toward

different political viewpoints by arresting journalists who were doing nothing more than reporting news and opinions," says Human Rights Watch.

Local journalist detained by U.S. military forces

Canadian Television (CTV) journalist Jawed Ahmad (22), was detained by U.S. military forces at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, for almost three months without charge. He was detained in Kandahar at the end of October 2007, according to his brother, Siddique Ahmad. Siddique, who spoke with CPJ through a translator by phone from Afghanistan, said that he had last communicated with his detained brother via a video link provided by the International Committee of the Red

Cross in Kabul on January 29. CTV officials say they believe Ahmad was detained on October 25, which was when Siddique called correspondent Paul Workman, Ahmad's colleague near Kandahar, to tell him of his detention.

Ahmad had only worked in journalism for one year, according to New York Times correspondent Carlotta Gall, who knows both him and Siddique from her reporting trips to Kandahar.

Sri Lanka Police Assault TV journalist

24 February 2008, Colombo : The Free Media Movement (FMM) is appalled to learn of the treatment meted out by a Senior Inspector of the Sri Lankan Police to a journalist who was on the scene of a bomb blast in Colombo. On 23 February, Sugath Dharmapriya, a news producer of the Derana TV channel covering the bomb blast on a bus in Mount Lavinia, a suburb of Colombo, was abused and assaulted by a Senior Inspector of the Mount Lavinia Police, Mahesh Perera. The FMM unequivocally condemns this reprehensible behaviour by the Senior Police Officer.

The same senior Police Officer verbally abused another TV journalist, Aravinda Sri Nissanka a month ago and detained him for over two hours without any valid reason.

Source : International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)

Media Violation in Nepal during Feb. 2008

Threat	4
Manhandle	5
Misbehaviour	8
Loot	1
Vandalism	8
Arrest	1
Attack	8



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Published by:

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