

Press Freedom Violation Down, Fear among Journalists Unabated

(Media Monitoring from February 16-March 15, 2012)

Information

A total of six incidents of press freedom violation occurred during this month from February 16-March 15, 2012.

Journalists- Shравan Deuba associated with the *Nayapatrika daily*, Deepak Oli with the *Sourya daily*, and Bhim Chaudhari with the *Tarai Television* were made captive for two hours from 7:30pm onwards by the timber smugglers and threatened of life if they wrote news about the smuggling on March 12, 2012 in Doti, a district in the far-western region of Nepal.

A reporter with the *Nagarik daily*, Upendra Lamichhane from Birgunj was attacked in Bara, a district in the southern plain of central region of Nepal on March 12, 2012 without any apparent reason.

Similarly, Govinda Subedi associated with the *Himdut daily* published from Pokhara was beaten by a gang in a number of 9-10 while returning home from the newspaper office on 11 March 2012. He received injuries to legs and head. The attack by a person named Arjun Baidya left journalist Lamichhane seriously injured. He got his nose fractured. He has been undergoing treatment at the National Hospital, Birgunj.

On March 7, 2012, two tipsy persons, one named Bhakta Bahadur Budha among them, seized the camera journalist Sher Bahadur Khadka was using to take a picture of a cultural program at Atichaur VDC of Bajura, a district in the far western region of Nepal. They manhandled saying, 'why are you taking picture?' He is affiliated with the local *Radio Bajura*.

A group of thieves broke into the office of the *Drishti weekly* published from the capital city in the night of March 6, 2012 and took away computer hardware thereby disrupting the newspaper service and making people deprived of their right to information.

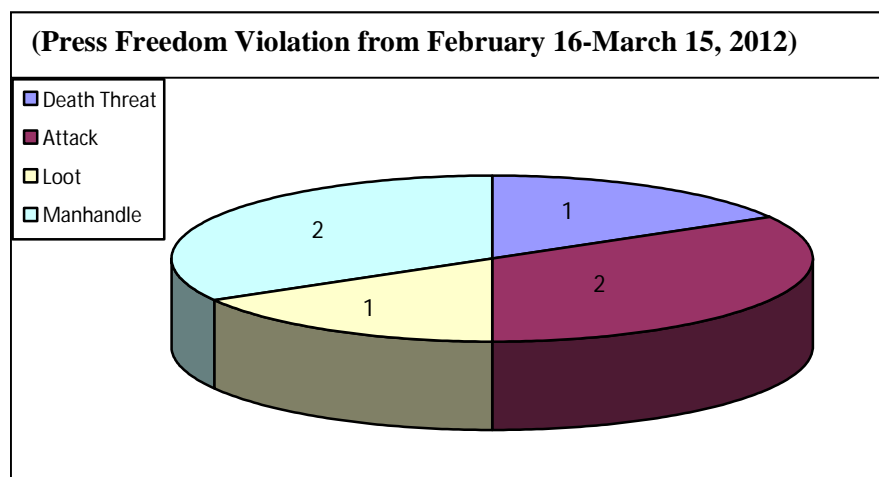
Journalists in the *Metro FM* run by the Kathmandu Metropolis were manhandled by the employees under the guidance of FM management and taken under control by the police while they were in a peaceful agitation with the demand of permanence in the job. Journalists with the FM, Yuvraj Bidrohi and Raju Lama among others were also intimidated by the police under the direction of the FM management on February 24, 2012.

The Kathmandu District Attorney, without sufficient investigation, filed a case on copy right against journalist and lyricist Surya Kumar Chhetri working with the *Ujjyalo FM* in Kathmandu on February 3, 2012 over airing investigative news story about the CRBT fraud.

Meanwhile, the Area Police Office, Simara arrested assailant Baidya and began investigation into the case.

Similarly, the District Police Office in Pokhara apprehended a dozen of people in connection with the attack on journalist Subedi, and investigating into the case.

The Film Development Board, a government body, has made public a 10-point policies and program and decided to ban the morning show of the film.



Analysis

Although the number of press freedom violation has declined this months, the journalists have been attacked from various sectors and working under terror and threats. With the declining security situation across the country, journalists are obviously the victims.

Because of very low wages and insecurity in the media houses, the professional security of journalists is challenged in Nepal. The protest of the journalists in the Metro FM run by local government demanding minimum wage shows that even the government is not serious about the rights to journalists and has ignored the Working Journalists' Act.

The prompt action of the police personnel to nab those involved in attack on journalist in Kaski and Bara district is a laudable in deed.

But in the name of making the film sector respected and disciplined, the 10-point policy and program by the Film Development Board has intended to curtail the freedom of expression. It is appalling.

Conclusion

As the free and fair atmosphere for journalists to carry out their works is not created, the chance of further attacks and threats on journalists can not be ruled out.

Although the local administration as in Kaski and Bara has taken prompt action mete out punishment to those involved in the attack on journalist, the central administration is not that active. So, unless the administration nationwide is active and aware about journalists' rights and press freedom, journalist will continue facing challenges in the days ahead.

Moreover, the political parties are serving their individual and partisan interests at a time to focus the constitution-writing and conclusion of peace process. It would undoubtedly be resulted in further chaos, and the disorder would render negative impact on press freedom. If the peace process is botched up, the journalists and civil society will face more challenges.

As done last month by the government to suppress people's right to information by categorizing the information, a government body, Film Development Board, this month, tried to trample people's freedom of expression by bringing a 10-point policy and program which is clear to suppress people's rights to information and expression. It indicates that the government can bring any suppressive policy at any time, there greater level of campaign for people's rights to information need to be launched by the media and civil society.

Similarly, pressure on the government and various media houses is essential to make them fully abide by the laws relating to journalists' rights.

