



February 19, 2007

To SAMSN members and friends

Welcome to the South Asia Media Solidarity Network's (SAMSN) monthly e-bulletin. The next bulletin will be sent on Monday March 19, 2007 and inputs are most welcome. We encourage contributions: to let others know what you are doing; to seek solidarity and support from other SAMSN members; and to find out what others are doing in the region. To contribute, email ifj@ifj-asia.org

SAMSN is a grouping of journalists' trade unions, press freedom organisations and journalists in South Asia that have agreed to work together to support the freedom of expression and association in the region. SAMSN was formed at a meeting of these groups in Kathmandu in September 2004. The group agreed to stand in solidarity and work together for media reform, for an independent pluralist media and to build public respect for the work of journalists in the region. For further information on SAMSN, visit <http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html>

Please distribute this bulletin widely among colleagues in the media.

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1. Journalist missing in war ravaged Jaffna

Subramaniam Ramachandran, 37, Vadamaratchi correspondent for *Yarl Thinakkural* and *Valampuri*, has gone missing since February 15, according to IFJ affiliate Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka (FMM). The FMM apprehends that his life may be in danger as retaliatory killings and abductions are reported in Jaffna on almost a daily basis. Since January 2005, 802 persons have disappeared in Jaffna peninsula. Additionally, the Right to Information of the entire population of the Jaffna peninsula is at grave risk. Newspapers are on the verge of closing down because of the paucity of printing materials. No news radio or TV channels are available in the area. See ifj@ifj-asia.org

2. Sixteen countries demand Parameshawary's release

Press freedom and journalists' organisations around the world joined to demand the release of Sri Lankan *Mawbima* journalist Munusamy Parameshawary (23), who has been detained without charge under the newly enacted Terrorism Prevention emergency regulations for more than 60 days. Supporting a campaign by the FMM, journalists' organisations from 16 countries, including Pakistan, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Hong Kong, India, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Taiwan, Korea, USA, UK, Australia, Denmark, Bangladesh and Norway wrote letters to the Sri Lankan government protesting her detention. Locally, Sri Lankan journalists and their organisations sent more than 500 postcards to the government calling for Parameshawary's release. Visit www.ifj-asia.org.



3. Training skills for women's rights and gender reporting

IFJ Asia program manager Laxmi Murthy conducted a train the trainer for gender reporting in Sri Lanka from February 2-4, under the FMM-IFJ South Asia Women's Fund supported project. The training focussed on refreshing training skills, as well as introducing advanced training techniques. The participants, a group of Sri Lankan women and men journalists, will go on to deliver a one-day Women's Rights and Gender Reporting training module, which includes sessions on portrayal of women in the media, gender sensitive reporting, using gender neutral language in reporting, along with examining the thorny issue of sexual harassment in the media workplace. For more information: ifjsouthasia@hotmail.com.

4. Media targeted during unrest in Nepal's Terai

According to IFJ affiliate Federation of Nepalese Journalists, workers of the Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum (MJAF) - which has led the two-week-long protests in Terai demanding rights for people of the region - attacked five journalists when they were trying to cover a peace rally near Tankesinwari area of the eastern town. In addition, five daily newspapers and seven weeklies being published from Jhapa, an eastern district of Nepal, decided to stop their publication from February 5, prompted by the shortage of printing paper in the district as well as the lack of safety and security of journalists. For more information contact mediamonitor@fnjnepal.org

5. New press restrictions in Bangladesh

New media restrictions have been rolled out after the Bangladesh government declared a state of emergency a month ago. Increased censorship and media crackdowns have ensued since January 11 when Bangladesh President, Iajuddin Ahmed, stepped down as interim leader after months of political tension. Journalists were prevented from circulating freely in Dhaka while media agencies were shut down. Television stations were forced to broadcast news from the state television network, and newspapers were warned not to report on protests, publish critical analysis or criticise the interim government. For more information, contact ifjsouthasia@hotmail.com.

6. Trade union training in Afghanistan

IFJ trainer Mike Dobbie participated in a trade union training program with journalists' organisations in Afghanistan from February 5-8. The IFJ portion of the workshop, being organised by the Solidarity Centre in Afghanistan, focussed on trade union organising and leadership skills. It was a practical session focusing on the nuts and bolts of how to build strong unions. This was followed by a briefing on the Afghan draft labour law. In other news, the IFJ has secured funds from the European Commission in Afghanistan for an 18-month program which will focus on the media's role in promoting democracy and accountable governance. Contact ifj@ifj-asia.org for more.

7. International safety and press freedom mission to Pakistan

In response to the deteriorating safety and press freedom situation in Pakistan, and following a directive of the IFJ Executive Committee, the IFJ is sending an urgent international mission to Pakistan. This mission, scheduled for February 21-25, is comprised of the IFJ, National Union of Journalists (NUJ), FMM, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the editor (Delhi) of *The Telegraph*. The mission, being led by IFJ President Christopher Warren, is being organised in collaboration with IFJ Pakistan affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. Contact ifjsouthasia@hotmail.com for more.

8. Indo-Pak conflict summit New Delhi February 27

The high-level media summit under the USIP-funded project, 'Bridging the Divides: Improving Relations between India and Pakistan' has now been scheduled for February 27 in New Delhi. It will provide a forum for about 30 senior journalists from India and Pakistan to discuss media issues of mutual concern. This is an IFJ project being implemented in India and Pakistan in partnership with the All India Newspaper Employees Federation in India and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists in Pakistan. Contact ifjsouthasia@hotmail.com for more information.



9. Roundtable meeting on press freedom in Chattisgarh

In order to further develop work on monitoring and highlighting violations of press freedom, consolidate regional networks and reach out to media in regions of conflict, the IFJ is conducting needs assessment missions in conflict areas in India. Working journalists, editors, trade unionists, human rights activists and other key players attended the fourth in a series of round table discussions on press freedom, held on January 27 in Raipur, Chattisgarh. Participants related the difficulties in covering the on-going Maoist conflict, restrictions by the government, as well as the lack of safety for media personnel. This research is supported by UNESCO. Contact Laxmi Murthy at ifjsouthasia@hotmail.com.

10. Intimidation of journalists in Assam on the rise

Following the breakdown of the ceasefire between the government and the banned armed militant group United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the media in the strife torn state is coming increasingly under attack. IFJ affiliates, the Indian Journalists Union and the National Union of Journalists (India), report that the ULFA has warned North East Television to pack up and go, after the station broadcast negative reports about the group's activities. Furthermore, the editor of *Dainik Assam*, Dharendra Nath Chakraborty, and veteran journalist Dhiren Bezbarua, have reportedly received several death threats from the UFLA, as a result of their stories. For more information ifj@ifj-asia.org

11. NWMI national meet in Bangalore

From February 9-11, more than 100 women journalists from all over India gathered in Bangalore at the Fifth National Meeting of the Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI). Representatives from the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also participated in the meeting, which provided a unique forum to discuss professional issues of concern to mediawomen. Sessions included: IT/ITES/ICTs and gender; regional (Kannada) language journalism; the creation of media empires; networking and collaboration at the South Asia level, provided opportunities for stimulating discussions. A public meeting addressed by world renowned journalist and feminist Gloria Steinem was one of the highlights. For a full report of the meeting see www.nwmindia.org.

12. Latest South Asia protests

[Sri Lanka: IFJ demands swift investigation into kidnapping of Sri Lankan journalist – 06/02/07](#)

[India: IFJ calls on Assam militants to withdraw threat of “Dire Consequences” to Satellite Channel – 06/02/07](#)

[Pakistan: IFJ demands authorities step up search for missing Pakistan editor – 02/02/07](#)

[Sri Lanka: International journalist community lobbies for release of Sri Lankan journalist – 31/01/2007](#)

[Nepal: IFJ outraged over violence against journalists during demonstrations in Nepal – 30/01/2007](#)

[India: IFJ protests as militants threaten journalists over reports of “Secret Deal” with Indian regional government - 30/01/07](#)

If SAMSUN members have any information on a press freedom violation, please make sure you immediately contact staff at IFJ Asia so action can be taken.

Jacqueline Park
Emma Walters
Pi James
Laxmi Murthy
IFJ Asia-Pacific
www.ifj-asia.org
ifj@ifj-asia.org

SAMSUN Members
Afghan Independent Journalists' Union, Afghanistan



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

CHRISTOPHER WARREN
President
AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

Bangladesh Journalists' Rights Forum (BJRF), Bangladesh
Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Bangladesh
All India Newspapers Employees' Federation (AINEF), India
Indian Journalists' Union (IJU), India
National Union of Journalists India (NUJI), India
Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Nepal
National Union of Journalists Nepal (NUJN), Nepal
Nepal Press Union (NPU), Nepal
CEHURDES, Nepal
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan
Pakistan Press Foundation, Pakistan
Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), Sri Lanka
Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions (FMETU), Sri Lanka
Free Media Movement (FMM), Sri Lanka
Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum (BMSF: Human Rights Journalists Forum of Bangladesh)
Media Watch, Bangladesh