



## A LAW TO PROTECT JOURNOS IS MUST

**With** rapid expansion of media, pressure on mediapersons too is burgeoning day-by-day. Daily astonishing exposes of corruption and wrongdoings of influential people have escalated the frequency of attacks on journalists by politicians, administrative authorities, police and mafia groups.

In fact, mediapersons have been on the target of these forces for long and they skip no chance to dent the media activism. The situation has taken a turn that there are reports of repeated clash between mediapersons, administration and police even during daily reporting. It is now order of the day. There is hardly a day when mediapersons do not face jostling. The situation is almost same in all the cities whether it is a metropolitan city like New Delhi or a town. Undoubtedly, the cut throat competition between some media houses is also responsible for growing threats to journalists.

This year three journalists have been killed in different parts of the country. The entire media fraternity is now worried over the reported involvement of underworld in the killing of Mumbai based Mid Day journalist J. Dey. Earlier, two journalists were killed in Chhattisgarh.

Extremely agitated over the killings of journalists and government apathy towards protection of mediapersons, the National Union of Journalists (India), on June 25, staged countrywide dharnas and organised protest meetings demanding enactment of a Journalists Protection Act. A memorandum to this effect was also presented to the President of India, Smt Pratibha Patil. The dharna organised at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi was attended by hundreds of senior journalists and many veteran journalists addressed the gathering.

The question arises why is the enactment of such a law necessary? Media has been described the Fourth Pillar in Indian Democracy. But the media does not enjoy the rights and privileges that have been granted to the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary in the Constitution. The only strength behind the media is just the freedom of expression.

The blind race between different media houses to dominate each other and also to achieve higher TRP basically forces the journalists to take up new and sensational issues everyday. For this objective, they come across many kinds of people like politicians, administrative authorities, police officials as well as criminal elements. The mediapersons are threatened with dire consequences whenever they expose the corruption on high level, infighting in political parties, nexus between political leaders and mafias, etc. In such life-threatening situations the mediapersons definitely need protection so that they can discharge their duty more responsibly and freely. The National Union of Journalists (India) has come up with some important suggestions to be incorporated in the proposed Journalists Protection Act. Complaint should be registered in police station on intimidation, attack or torture of journalists and all such complaints should be investigated by a DCP level police official. It has also been suggested that the investigation of such complaints should be conducted within two days and action is ensured against the culprits. The NUJ(I) wants that the same action, which is taken against a person for creating obstruction in discharging official duty, is taken against those people also who attack the mediapersons during coverage. Apart from it, whenever any journalist is assassinated or attacked the case should be heard in a fast track court to ensure timely justice. It is essential today, as it has been witnessed that no action is taken against the culprits for months even after registration of FIR in police station.

With the enactment of Journalists Protection Act the definition of 'journalist' will also be decided. Presently, there is Working Journalist Act, but it has not properly been implemented so far. The proposed Journalists Protection Act will distinguish between a 'journalist' and a 'non-journalist'. It will also help curbing the misdeeds of some people who in the guise of journalists are found indulging in wrongdoings and thus defaming the entire media fraternity.

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