

MEDIA/FREEDOM OF PRESS - 2009

JANUARY to DECEMBER - 2009

Compiled By
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Private TV station attacked in Sri Lanka: police(1)

Colombo, January 06, 2009: Attackers torched a private TV station in Sri Lanka on Tuesday after it was labelled "unpatriotic" for its coverage of the war against Tamil rebels, police and media activists said. The studios and control room of the Maharaja TV network just outside Colombo were smashed and set alight in a pre-dawn attack, police said. Media rights activists said the station had been accused by sections of the state media of "unpatriotic" coverage and criticised for reporting a suicide bombing in Colombo on Friday, the day troops took the rebel political capital of Kilinochchi. "We strongly condemned the attack on the MTV offices and we urge the authorities to speedily investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice," said the president of the Working Journalists' Association, Sanath Balasuriya. Media rights activist Poddala Jayantha said the attack followed hate speech spread by a section of the state media. An MTV spokesman said men in a van without number plates had carried out the attack, which came two days after the station was hit with a petrol bomb. There were no casualties, but the station was severely damaged. Journalists, newspapers and even newspaper delivery boys in Sri Lanka have come under attack as part of the bitter ethnic war between Tamil Tiger rebels and Sri Lankan security forces. Several journalists -- some Tamils and others from the majority Sinhalese community -- have been killed, but no one has been held responsible despite government promises to investigate. (Hindustan Times 6/1/09)

Karnataka journalist held in defamation case, handcuffed (1)

Bangalore: "I fear for my life," B.V. Seetaram, chairman and director of the Chitra group, publisher of the daily Karavali Ale, told The Hindu after his arrest in a two-year-old defamation case in Udupi on Sunday. Mr. Seetaram, who is also the Editor-in-Chief of the group, was produced handcuffed before court in Udupi on Monday. He declined bail as he feared arrest by the Mangalore police on other charges. "If I am moved to Mangalore jail, I may be harmed by Bajrang Dal elements within the jail," he said. The court remanded him to judicial custody till January 17. He said he was being "targeted" in an old case because his newspaper reports, with "principled stand" against the activities of Sangh Parivar organisations, were "embarrassing to the government." He said that while pro-government newspapers with defamation cases pending against them were let off by the police and the district administration, his daily was "singularly targeted" for its "criticism of the Bajrang Dal and the police during the recent attacks on churches in Mangalore, and for its stand in support of farmers in the anti-Special Economic Zone agitation." Karavali Ale, with a readership of four lakh, has been at the receiving end of a series of legal cases and attacks on its printing facilities and distribution network. Mr. Seetaram and his wife were arrested in March 2007 on charges of promoting religious hatred through their newspaper columns. Days before the arrest, his office was broken into and computers and files were burnt. Since November 2008, the publishers of the newspaper have filed several police complaints accusing Sangh Parivar organisations of sabotaging their distribution network, attacking hawkers and burning bundles of the newspaper. The publishers lodged a complaint with the Press Council of India and wrote to the Superintendent of Police, Mangalore, the Inspector-General of Police (Western Range) and the Director-General of Police, Karnataka, demanding action against the organisations named. Press Council chairman Justice G.N. Ray wrote in December to Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa directing him to take firm steps to address the grievances of Karavali Ale. In a separate letter, the Council also asked for a report from the Chief Secretary on the latest situation. Home Minister B.V. Acharya, however, denied that Karavali Ale and its editor were being targeted. He said the "law is taking its own course" and the police took action against him because they felt that "his writings were bordering on yellow journalism and disturbed the peace in the region." He alleged that Mr. Seetaram was indulging in "character assassination and blackmailing." A.M. Prasad, IGP

* This is a collection of previously published news and views from the print as well as the electronic media, whose reference marked at the end of each news items. Department of Documentation and Library (DDL) of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi neither claims to the veracity of the facts in the news nor subscribes to the views expressed.

(Western Range), maintained that Mr. Seetaram was arrested in connection with a “pending non-bailable warrant.” Action was taken on various complaints filed by Mr. Seetaram earlier. The police arrested more than 15 persons in response to the complaints and provided protection to him and to the newspaper’s vans. (The Hindu 6/1/09)

I am living a life out of a suitcase: Taslima (1)

KOLKATA: “Paris has offered me an apartment [to stay in]. Sweden too offered me an apartment. [But] it does not mean I have to live there... I have been living a life out of a suitcase since I was forced to leave India last year,” controversial Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen wrote to The Hindu on Monday. In an e-mail from Europe, Ms. Nasreen said she would return to India this month. “My visa [in India] expires on February 17. I hope it will be extended.” She did not mention where she was writing from. Ms. Nasreen, who left India for Europe in October 2008, said she wanted to “live in Bangladesh or in India.” “All my belongings are in India. I hope I will be allowed to live there. If not, if I am forced to leave India again, then I have to be back to a nomadic life or live in Paris, which would be like a bus stand for me waiting for a bus to go home,” Ms. Nasreen wrote. She points out that “it is strange that in India and Bangladesh there was a competition among politicians on who could hate me more.” In contrast, in the West, it was “who could love me more.” India was as democratic as any country in Europe. But “in some democracies the freedom of expression is valued. In some it is not.” Ms. Nasreen left Kolkata, which she calls her home in the wake of violent protests in the city in September 2007 by supporters of the State unit of the All India Minority Forum, demanding that her visa be revoked. “I want to be proud of India. I want to tell Paris that I don’t need their shelter. That there is a place for me in a vast country like India, in the world’s largest democracy.” Ms. Nasreen was made an honorary citizen of Paris in July 2008. (The Hindu 6/1/08)

Protest against arrest and handcuffing of Seetaram (1)

BANGALORE: About 100 journalists from various newspapers and electronic media under the banner of Journalists for Free Media staged a dharna in Bangalore on Wednesday to protest the arrest and handcuffing of editor-in-chief of Kannada daily Karavali Ale in connection with a defamation case. Several editors, chiefs and senior journalists took part in the protest which was held in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue here. Several journalists, including Lankesh Patrike editor Gowri Lankesh, Chief of Bureau of The Hindu Parvathi Menon, Special Correspondent of The Week, N. Bhanutej, Udaya News Channel’s News Editor S.R. Aradhya and Bangalore Reporters’ Guild general secretary B.N. Sreedhara addressed the gathering. Senior journalist from The New Indian Express T.J.S. George also took part in the protest. An open letter to Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa demanding that the non-bailable arrest warrants against Mr. Seetaram be withdrawn and the media be allowed to function in a free and fair manner, was read out at the meeting. The letter was later faxed to the Chief Minister, Home Minister V.S. Acharya and Law Minister S. Suresh Kumar. The letter stated that the “campaign of intimidation against Mr. Seetaram and his publications are nothing but an attempt to muzzle the right of the press to criticism and free expression.” The easy resort to the provisions of the archaic defamation laws to criminally prosecute a journalist is shocking in a State that has had a fine tradition of media freedom, the letter noted. Copies of the letter were sent to the chairperson of the Press Council of India, the president of the Editors’ Guild of India and the president of the Indian Newspapers’ Society. The Bangalore Reporters’ Guild in a statement condemned the handcuffing of Mr. Seetaram. Guild general secretary B.N. Sreedhara sought immediate intervention of the State Government in the episode to secure the release of Mr. Seetaram. The Udupi district unit of Karnataka Komu Sauharda Vedike has criticised the arrest of Mr. Seetaram. The Vedike condemned the police for handcuffing Mr. Seetaram. Hassan District Working Journalists Association on Wednesday criticised the arrest of Mr. Seetaram. A resolution was passed condemning the action. Protesting against the arrest of Mr. Seetaram, members of Mysore District Journalists’ Association and district unit of People’s Union For Civil Liberties staged a demonstration. The Delhi Union of Journalists has called upon the Karnataka Government to end the continued harassment and arrest of Mr. Seetaram. It has appealed to its members to be ready for observing a “Black Day” if remedial action was not taken immediately. (The Hindu 8/1/09)

Opposition parties protest against journalist’s arrest (1)

MANGALORE: Parties opposed to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the State came out in protest against the treatment meted out to B.V. Seetaram, director of Chitra Publications Pvt. Ltd., which publishes the Kannada daily “Karavali Ale”. Members of various Opposition parties staged a

demonstration in front of Deputy Commissioner's office here on Monday. District leaders of the Congress, the Janata Dal (Secular), the Janata Dal (United), the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) participated in the demonstration. Leader of the CPI B.K Krishnappa said, "We are not here to give out a character certificate in favour of Karavali Ale's style of journalism or to its editors. What has happened to the newspaper is an attempt to muzzle the freedom of the press, and we strongly condemn it." His party colleague Seetharam Berinja said that the "present lawlessness" in the State was a matter of great concern. "This is what the BJP meant when it promised the Gujarat model of governance in Karnataka," he added. B. Madhava, CPI(M) district secretary, said that since the time BJP came to power in the State there had been frequent cases of human rights violations. "The attacks on churches and the present attack on Karavali Ale demonstrate that we are being governed by fascist forces." Echoing Mr. Madhava, Congress leader Ivan D'Souza described the attacks on the press as part of "fascist machinations" and added that this was not an attack on Mr. Seetaram or his newspaper. "With this act the future of the free press in the State is under threat," Mr. D'Souza added. (The Hindu 13/1/09)

Reporting can be injurious to health (1)

Colombo, January 14, 2009: Days after the midday murder of Sunday Leader editor Lasantha Wickrematunga, the cold blooded crime continues to raise questions. Questions not only about the shoddy investigation into the murder (which has so far apparently thrown up zero leads) but also about media freedom and the future of free debate in country where reporters need to either impose self-censorship or continuously watch their backs. Not that being alert helps much. A new group on the social networking site, Facebook, called Protesting Killing of Journalists in Sri Lanka, circulated lists of dozens of journalists who have either been killed or assaulted in the last few years. As the numbers reveal, the island country continues to be pretty high up in the list of countries dangerous for journalists. Killed, abducted, arrested or simply thrashed — occupational hazards that reporters, especially with local newspapers, have had to contend with other than deadlines; allegedly because they were critical of the government. Reporters without Borders did not mince its opinion after Lasantha was shot dead from close range while on way to work. "President Mahinda Rajapaksa, his associates and the government media are directly to blame because they incited hatred against him and allowed an outrageous level of impunity to develop as regards violence against the press. Sri Lanka's image is badly sullied by this murder, which is an absolute scandal and must not go unpunished." Rajapaksa of course brushed aside allegations at an interaction with foreign correspondents on Monday evening. "We are at the peak now," he said meaning that the government was doing good after winning stretches of the war against the Tamil rebels. "Why should we attack journalists? Let the police do its job. They have only just begun investigations," he said. The press freedom organisation had its own take and added: "the military victories in the north against the Tamil Tigers rebels must not be seen as a green light for death squads to sow terror among government critics, including outspoken journalists." When asked why a single person has not been arrested for attacks on journalists, Rajapaksa claimed that it was because none of the victims gave statements. "What can we do without evidence? Should we just pick up someone and show him to the media as the person responsible," Rajapaksa asked. The situation here is complicated by the presence of quasi-political but armed groups active in parts of the country. Known to attack people, especially those critical, with impunity, some allege that these groups enjoy political patronage. What clearly emerges that it would take more than social networking for journalists to stay safe in Sri Lanka. (Hindustan Times 14/1/09)

Breaking news, reporter Karat (1)

New Delhi, Jan. 14: News television heads who have been lobbying support against the government's proposed move to set guidelines for the electronic media, especially in the light of the coverage of the Mumbai attacks, have found an unlikely ally in Prakash Karat. Responding in uncharacteristic fashion to appeals made by channel heads, the CPM general secretary today sent a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressing common cause with the electronic media honchos. In the letter, Karat has said that his party was of the opinion that no hasty step should be taken. "Our party is of the view that apart from the self-regulatory mechanism put in place by the news channels, it is necessary to have co-regulation through an independent regulatory body. How this is to be done has to be discussed and a common approach arrived at. Till then, no steps should be taken... to further regulate the news channels." This is a rare occasion — probably the first time — Karat has communicated directly with the

Prime Minister after his bitter break over the nuclear deal. Indeed, the CPM boss is not known to have written an individual missive to Singh on any policy issue in over a year. Karat's decision to write to the Prime Minister himself rather than speak through the CPM politburo, which usually spells out the party's stand on policy issues, may have been a way of flagging the plea of news channel heads for special attention. Karat is related, by marriage, to the owners of the television news network NDTV. The wife of Karat and that of NDTV boss Prannoy Roy are sisters. Other political parties, too, appeared to side with the media, though no other party has taken up the matter at the apex level as the CPM has. Although Amar Singh, the Samajwadi Party leader, whom the channel heads met today, has promised to raise the issue with Prime Minister, he is of the view that "there should be a provision to prevent enemy nations from accessing sensitive information...". If the amendments are incorporated in their current form, the channels will be allowed to show only authorised feed of footage of emergency situations. The representatives of the news broadcasters had met the Prime Minister yesterday. Today, they called on L.K. Advani and Sonia Gandhi. According to the broadcasters' association, Singh said the proposed changes in the act would be finalised only after the widest possible consultations. But information ministry sources said the government was determined to go ahead. (Telegraph 15/1/09)

Journalists worse than terrorists: Zardari (1)

Karachi, January 20, 2009: Journalists in Pakistan have reacted strongly to a remark where president Asif Ali Zardari likened them to terrorists. A report on daily The News on Monday said that the Pakistani president told a delegation of businessmen from the troubled North West Frontier Province that "journalists are bigger terrorists than terrorists themselves." Journalists are the biggest terrorists, Zardari is said to have remarked while talking about the issue of terrorism in NWFP and federally administered tribal areas (FATA). The paper quoted businessmen as saying that the statement "came out of the blue" and that there was "intensity of emotion when it was made." The paper said that the possible reason could have been the media's vociferous criticism of the Zardari-led government for its handling of the situation post the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. "The president should remain apolitical but he is involved in the day-to-day affairs of the government," said Arif Nizami, editor of The Nation newspaper, adding "and that is why he is in the focus of the media." Nizami adds with a laugh "if we are terrorising the government then we must be doing our job." Some journalists say it is possible that Zardari's comments could have been taken out of context. But most are upset with him. "When politicians are unable to deliver on their promises, they retreat to a bunker-like position and believe all sorts of conspiracies," says Talat Aslam, editor of The News. (Hindustan Times 20/1/09)

Journalists attacked in Colombo (1)

Colombo, January 24, 2009: Attacks on journalists continued in Sri Lanka with unidentified assailants attacking a newspaper editor and his wife on Friday morning. Upali Tennakoon, editor of a weekly newspaper, Rivira, and his wife were on way to office on Friday morning when four motor cycle-borne waylaid the couple and attacked them with knives. Dr Prasad Ariyawansa, a doctor at the government-run Colombo National Hospital, told news agencies that both Tennakoon and his wife were treated for lacerations on their hands and foreheads. Both were expected to recover from their injuries. The attack comes two weeks after Lasantha Wickrematunge, editor of Sunday Leader newspaper, was shot dead on way to work. The murder of the editor, who was critical of the government on certain issues, triggered strong condemnation from the world over. Many said the future of free opinion in Sri Lanka was being jeopardised. Wickrematunga's murder came barely two days after a private television station was attacked by heavily armed gunmen. Property and equipment worth lakhs were destroyed. On Thursday, the chief government whip Dinesh Gunawardena told Parliament that nine journalists have been killed and 27 assaulted in the country since 2006. He added that the number of journalists abducted were five in the same period. Following the attack on Tennakoon and his wife, President Mahinda Rajapaksa instructed the Inspector General of Police to appoint a special police team to investigate into the cases of attacks against the media. In a related development, rights body, Human Rights Watch has urged the Rajapaksa administration to drop charges against JS Tissainayagam, a Tamil journalist who was arrested in March and indicted five months later under an anti-terrorism law. "Tissainayagam's arrest was politically motivated and his detention has involved a litany of due process violations," said Brad Adams, the New York-based group's Asia director, agencies reported. (Hindustan Times 24/1/09)

Rights body urges Colombo to maintain press freedom (1)

New York, Jan 25: An international human rights body has urged the Sri Lankan government to halt immediately framing scribes on fake charges. President Mahinda Rajapakse should order prosecutors to drop all charges against journalists held on politically motivated charges, the New York based Human Rights Watch said in a letter to the President. The letter said journalist J S Tissainayagam, publisher N Jashiharan, and his wife V Valamathy have been in detention since March 2008. It identified serious violations of due process and the right to a fair trial by the authorities in the Tissainayagam case. "Tissainayagam's arrest was politically motivated and his detention has involved a litany of due process violations," Brad Adams, director of Asia division at the Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. "The prosecution of journalists only reinforces the impression that the government has embarked on a systematic campaign to smother free media," he added. In recent months, press freedom in Sri Lanka has come under serious assault, including the recent killing of the journalist Lasantha Wickremetunga and an attack on the offices of Maharaja Television in Colombo. (New Kerala 25/1/09)

Understanding between politics & media must for development (1)

Bhopal, Jan 24: Mutual understanding between politics and media is must for development of the society. It was expressed by the Vice President of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Anil Dave at a ten-day workshop on "Media Manthan", which is being organised under the aegis of People's Journalism Educational Institute on Friday at the premises of the institute. The workshop is being organised on the subject of "effect of media and politics on society". Dave said that media and politics always play role in natural disaster, communal riot and they fulfil their responsibilities in such kind of incidents. There is need to social awareness for maintaining ideology of politics and media in today's and modern age. The spokesman of Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) Brijmohan Shrivastava was the special speaker of the programme. He said that media and politics maximum effects in the society, so every person should maintain his behaviour in the society. He further said that both the techniques give great contribution to come out in light the various problems and burning issues of the society. Senior journalist Arvind Sharma said that print media has maintained its prestige and limit as well as its principles till now. Journalist and political leader should try to work and play role as a social worker. The Executive Director of the Institute Mahesh Shrivastava said that media and politics should maintain mutual understand and should try to develop the society. The Principal of the Institute Vinod Tiwari conduct the programme. The workshop would be continued till January 28. (Central Chronicle 25/1/09)

Editor incident: Jana assures action (1)

HYDERABAD: Home Minister K. Jana Reddy on Sunday assured a delegation of the Telugu Desam, TRS, CPI (M), CPI and MBT leaders that firm action would be taken against those responsible for the attack on Siasat editor Zahid Ali Khan and two of its staffers. The delegation submitted a memorandum to Mr. Reddy urging the government to arrest all persons behind the attack and take stringent action against them. This was necessary to create an atmosphere of full freedom in the old city. The Home Minister told members of the delegation that four persons were already arrested. Action would also be taken against the Majlis MLAs after an inquiry, according to CPI leader S. Sudhakar Reddy, MP. The memorandum urged the Minister to provide special protection to editors and reporters of newspapers and take similar measures in view of the key role played by the press in a democracy. Recalling various incidents in which MIM activists were involved, including the attack on CPI (M) MP P. Madhu, it said people believed that the MIM "atrocities" could be halted, only if the government acted impartially. The Opposition leaders are planning to meet Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy on Tuesday to take up the issue. Editors of print and electronic media severely condemned the attack on Zahid Ali Khan, editor, Siasat Urdu daily, and demanded action against MIM activists, the suspected perpetrators of the attack. "We express our fullest solidarity with Mr. Khan and resolve to stand by his paper and its freedom", they said in a joint statement here on Sunday. The signatories to the statement are: Mir Ayub Ali Khan (Times of India), Allan Naryana (Andhra Jyothi), P. Vijaya Babu (Andhra Prabha), Piratla Venkateshwaralu (Krishna Patrika), K. Ramachandra Murthy (HMTV), Amer Ali Khan, Zaheeruddin Ali Khan (Siasat), Ashok Tankasala (Vaartha), Vidyaranya (Andhra Prabha), Maneesh Singh (Hindi Milap) and Syed Vicaruddin (Rahnuma-e-Deccan). Mr. Khan's paper was fearlessly exposing the 'misdeeds' of some MIM leaders and unlawful activities of other elements with the result the party leaders were threatening the Siasat editor and taking the threats to the extent of physical attack. The editors deplored the 'callous' attitude of the government and police in not taking action on the complaint lodged by Mr. Zahid Khan. "We the editors resent this undutiful and undemocratic attitude and demand action against the culprits", the statement said. The anti

press tendency which smacked of undemocratic intolerance on the part of political parties, various social organisations and even government leaders had been increasing in the recent months. The editors appealed to all democratically thinking people and the civil society to extend their support and solidarity to the media. (The Hindu 26/1/09)

Pak 2nd deadliest for journalists, India 3rd (1)

London, Feb. 3: Pakistan was the second deadliest place for journalists in 2008 with India following closely behind, according to a new report by a global press freedom watchdog that showed Asia has replaced West Asia as the most dangerous region in the world for mediapersons. Though more journalists were killed in Iraq (14) than any other country last year - for the sixth year in a row - Pakistan came second with six deaths as "chaos gripped the country's politics and conflict spread along the border with Afghanistan," the International Press Institute (IPI) said. India followed with deaths of five journalists, remaining at the third spot with Mexico and the Philippines, the Vienna-based group said in its annual "World Press Freedom Review." "Impunity remains a contagion in the region, particularly in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, but the murderers of journalists are also escaping prosecution in leading democracies such as India," IPI director David Dudge said. "Those who want to stifle free expression and frighten journalists into silence and self-censorship are succeeding because of impunity," he said releasing the report. The Indian scribes who lost their lives were Javed Ahmed Mir, Ashok Sodhi (Kashmir), Mohammed Muslimuddin, Jagajit Saikia (Assam) and Vikas Ranjan (Bihar), the report said. "Despite India's recent economic growth and long-standing democratic government, the country remained a dangerous place for journalists," the IPI said. "While journalists in the conflict-ridden north and Northeast continue to practice their professions in the line of fire, their colleagues in the rest of the country are frequently faced with intimidation and attacks from political parties," it said. The report said even in parts of India not directly affected by military action or political conflict, several cases of media harassment were reported. It mentioned a number of cases, including the attacks on the offices of Andhra Jyothi, on reporters from the Malayala Manorama group, on the home of Loksatta editor Kumar Ketkar in Maharashtra and on the studios of NDTV in Gujarat. The IPI, a global organisation of editors and media executives, recommended that an "apparent lack of political will to protect journalists needs to be addressed" by India. "The state must commit to prosecute those who compromise the freedom of the media" and "enact legislation to preserve the diversity of the media and to prevent monopolies from developing," it said. -PTI (Asian Age 4/2/09)

Media group says 109 media workers killed in 2008 (1)

Brussels (AP): At least 109 reporters and media workers were killed either intentionally or accidentally last year while on assignment, the International Federation of Journalists said on Wednesday. In its annual report on press freedom around the world, the group said covering stories in hot spots remained a "perilous" task for journalists, camera operators, producers and photographers. The media group urged governments to "step up" efforts to stop the killing of journalists. The IFJ reported 175 deaths of media workers in 2007. "The welcome relief brought about by the decline in the killings of journalists in 2008 has been short lived," said Aidan White, general secretary of the IFJ. "Ten colleagues died in January (2009) alone." The group counts all people employed by media organisations who died performing their duties, including not only journalists but also interpreters and drivers. Another group defending journalists' rights, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders estimated in January that 86 journalists were killed worldwide in 2008. White said Iraq remains the "deadliest" place to work as a journalist, despite a sharp drop in the murder rate of media staff. Sixteen journalists were killed in Iraq in 2008, compared with 65 in 2007. (The Hindu 5/2/09)

Lahore attack on Indian journalists a "vicious act" (1)

Islamabad: The South Asia Media Commission and the South Asian Free Media Association have condemned the attack on two Indian journalists in Lahore. SAMC chairman N. Ram and secretary-general Najam Sethi, and SAFMA secretary-general Imtiaz Alam expressed shock at Thursday's incident, describing it as "unfortunate and sad." The SAMC and SAFMA officials said it was a "vicious act to harm all the efforts to bring both the countries back on the peace track." They called on the Pakistan government to investigate the incident and ensure that the journalists' belongings, including their equipment, were returned. Jujhar Singh, a correspondent with the NewsX channel, told SAMC that he and his cameraman Tilak Raj had stopped at Anarkali Bazar for shooting when nine men surrounded

them and aggressively searched their pockets, bags and car. "Later, they took away our camera, mikes, four chips and mobile phones," Mr. Singh said. The journalists arrived in Pakistan on February 3 to work on a story related to Islamabad's reply to the Indian dossier on the Mumbai attacks. "Since Tuesday evening we have been sensing that we were being monitored by two men," Mr. Singh told SAMC. The correspondent added that the two men, he had seen sitting in the lobby of his hotel on Thursday morning, followed him on motorcycles and were joined by others in a van. — PTI (The Hindu 7/2/09)

Over 300 attacks on press in Nepal: report (1)

Kathmandu, Feb 8 : An international media mission that had arrived in Nepal after the brutal murder of a woman journalist to investigate attacks on the media wound up its four-day visit Sunday saying that there have been a staggering 342 cases of press freedom violation in the Himalayan republic during 2008. The team, comprising representatives from seven organisations, said continued attacks and threats against individuals and organisations were disheartening journalists in Nepal and forcing them to practise self-censorship. It would eventually affect Nepal's peace process and the journey to democracy, the mission warned. The team had met Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, whose party faces the brunt of accusations for attacks on the media after the fall of King Gyanendra's regime and the restoration of democracy. It also met opposition leader and former premier Girija Prasad Koirala as well as chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Subhash Nembang. "Attacks on media workers, publications and property are unacceptable," the mission said in a statement. "Those responsible must be held accountable for their actions and any substantive grievances over work conditions must be addressed through dialogue." Even after the Maoist insurgency ended in 2006, four journalists were killed in Nepal: J.P. Joshi, Birendra Sah, Pushkar Bahadur Shrestha and 24-year-old Uma Singh, whose murder last month triggered public outrage. The mission noted that authors of critical reports were being attacked but the attackers were not being brought to justice. The attacks on media were attacks on citizens' right to knowledge and the mission said it had noted that some perpetrators had political links. While demanding immediate and impartial investigations into the murder and disappearance of journalists, the mission has also asked for an inquiry into the killing of Dekendra Thapa. Thapa, a radio journalist in Dailekh district, was killed in 2004, when the civil war was at its peak, allegedly by the Maoists. Another journalist, Prakash Thakuri, disappeared from farwestern Kanchanpur district in 2007 and the government recently withdrew the charge against the accused. The mission said Prachanda had assured them that the case would be reopened. The mission also expressed concern about the arrest last week of high-flying journalist Rishi Dhamala and three others, who police alleged were involved in extorting a businessman on behalf of an armed organisation in Nepal's Terai. It said that police had not followed the correct procedure. The mission, comprising representatives from ARTICLE 19, International Federation of Journalists, International Media Support, International Press Institute, Reporters Without Borders, UNESCO and World Press Freedom Committee, said it would take up cudgels on behalf of Nepal's media in the international community. (New Kerala 8/2/09)

Press freedom under attack worldwide (1)

UNITED NATIONS: Journalists worldwide routinely are threatened and intimidated or worse, resulting in a climate of fear that endangers freedom of the press from Latin America to Southeast Asia, a media group reported on Tuesday. In a new report, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists notes that violent criminal gangs, paramilitaries, drug traffickers and street gangs routinely terrorize journalists in such countries as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. Vietnam, Burma, Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia have been following China's model of controlling the Internet and punishing those who get around the restrictions. "Today, the greatest threats to freedom of the press are more insidious than a generation ago because they are intended to induce a climate of fear and self-censorship through systematic violence and emblematic arrest," journalist and author Carl Bernstein wrote in the report's preface. The report, titled "Attacks on the Press," also notes that reporters in Africa rely on text messaging, though that same technology also is being used to threaten them. It criticizes the control over television coverage of the conflict in South Ossetia by the Russian and Georgian governments, and warns of a new regional agreement that threatens independent satellite stations in the Middle East. The CPJ report is being released less than a week after the International Federation of Journalists announced that at least 109 reporters and media workers were killed last year while on assignment and Iraq remains the deadliest place for a journalist to work. (Economic Times 11/2/09)

The Statesman Editor, Publisher arrested (1)

KOLKATA: The Editor and Publisher of the city-based newspaper, The Statesman, were arrested here on Wednesday on the charge of insulting the religious sentiment of a minority community. An article published by the newspaper last Friday led to mass protests and acts of violence in different parts of the city in the past few days. "We arrested Ravindra Kumar, Editor, and Anand Sinha, Publisher, from their residences acting on a complaint," Pradip Kumar Chattopadhyay, city police's Joint Commissioner (Administration), said here on Wednesday. The complaint was made under Section 295A (maliciously insulting the religions or the religious belief of any class) of the Indian Penal Code. Both Mr. Kumar and Mr. Sinha were produced before a metropolitan magistrate and were granted interim bail. (The Hindu 12/2/09)

Media persons manhandled, lathi-charged in Lucknow (1)

LUCKNOW: Accredited media persons here registered a strong protest with the Mayawati Government on Friday against use of intimidatory tactics by the police on some representatives of the print and electronic media in the CBI court. The incident took place when reporters were present in the CBI court to cover the presence of alleged mafia don Babloo Srivastava there. SP (East) Paresh Pandey allegedly manhandled and abused a journalist while the police reportedly resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the media persons. Demanding suspension of the police officer, agitated media persons converged on the Media Centre in the Lal Bahadur Shastri Annexe Bhawan. Hectic talks between Cabinet Secretary Shashank Shekhar Singh, assisted by Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Vijay Shankar Pandey, and office-bearers of the Uttar Pradesh State Accredited Correspondents Committee ended in a deadlock. The Government officials expressed their inability to suspend the official. However, they promised his transfer to an insignificant post. The Correspondents' Committee has demanded suspension of Mr. Pandey and an inquiry by a senior official. (The Hindu 14/2/09)

English media's coverage on Lankan issue criticized (1)

Chennai, February 14, 2009: The English media in the country was "largely projecting" the Tamils "struggle" in Sri Lanka as a terror movement and under-reported "human rights violation," by the Sri Lankan government, a newly formed non-governmental organisation, alleged on Saturday. Announcing the launch of the "Indians Against Genocide," Fr Jegath Gasper Raj, one of its members and Director of Tamil Maiyam, a cultural organisation whose patron is DMK Rajya Sabha member and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's daughter Kanimozhi, told reporters in Chennai that the forum was ready to work with the media on this matter. The English media should "now investigate, report and argue for the need of a UN Security Council mandated Inquiry Commission to go into all human rights violations against the Tamil people," he said. Quoting some statistics, which he said were carried by Amnesty International and the BBC, Raj said that since January this year, nearly 1,700 Tamils were killed and charged the Sri Lankan army with using a variety of bombs against the ethnic minorities. The newly formed forum would take out a peace walk here on February 22 from the War Memorial to Mahatma Gandhi statue demanding for an immediate ceasefire in the northern Sri Lanka and re-start the peace process "towards a lasting political solution,," he said. (Hindustan Times 14/2/09)

Attack on daily condemned (1)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The district unit of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) and the Thiruvananthapuram Press Club have protested against the attack on the Palakkad office of Mangalam daily on Friday night. In a press release on Saturday, the KUWJ district unit said the attack against the media should be condemned. In Kozhikode, KUWJ general secretary N. Padmanabhan said the intolerance exhibited by the CPI(M) leadership against the media in the State had resulted in the incident. (The Hindu 15/2/09)

Imphal dailies stay off stands (1)

Imphal, Feb. 14: All Imphal-based morning papers failed to hit the stands today after the newspaper establishments decided to suspend the day's publication after "threats" from the Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak). The All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) and editors said the outfit asked the dailies to stop publication after the latter failed to publish a list of names of close associates and workers of chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh in yesterday's publications. Prepak in a statement accused Ibobi Singh of allegedly sponsoring "state terrorism" and the security forces and police

of killing innocent people in “fake encounters”. The outfit detailed the alleged “fake encounters” and warned that it would start targeting Iqbal Singh, his cabinet colleagues, Congress MLAs and the chief minister’s active workers. The statement mentioned a list of 143 names of active workers. Though the daily papers yesterday published the statement, they did not carry the names of the workers. The outfit was not happy with the exclusion of the names and it allegedly asked the newspaper offices to close, AMWJU sources said. The sources said police also pressurised editors not to publish the statement issued by the outfit after getting information that the outfit had issued the statement. After suspending the day’s publication, an emergency meeting of journalists today decided to resume publication from tomorrow with an appeal to the outfit to withdraw the “ban” on newspapers. The meeting termed the “pressure” from the police and the outfit as “unfortunate”. The Iqbal Singh cabinet directed director-general of police Yumnam Joykumar Singh to constitute a “special cell” to deal with militants. An official source said the cabinet, which met last night, gave the directive after the Prepak issued the threat. (Telegraph 15/2/09)

Govt mulls commission for comprehensive media guidelines (1)

New Delhi, February 15, 2009: With ever increasing number of players occupying the media space coupled with introduction of more new age mediums, the government is now mulling a proposal to set up a commission to frame comprehensive guidelines encompassing all forms of media. The recently concluded Consultative Committee meeting of parliamentarians, chaired by Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Anand Sharma, while discussing repercussions of media coverage after 26/11, called for a comprehensive approach to lay out codes for the entire media. During the meeting, it was pointed out that tackling issues in piece-meal, like the government wants to do for the television media after the Mumbai terror attacks, might not have the desired results as it would still leave a large number of web-based and other electronic mediums unregulated. "There is need to frame guidelines applicable to all forms of media and not just television," Lok Sabha and member of the IB ministry's consultative committee Hanan Mollah, told PTI. "In keeping with their times, two media commissions set up during Jawaharlal Nehru and Morarji Desai's time were restricted to setting guidelines for newspapers alone. Since then no effort has been taken despite significant improvements in television, radio and all forms of web-based media," he added. Parliamentarians had suggested to inclusion of people from various media fields, politicians and social activists in the commission proposed to be headed by judicial experts. It was pointed out that framework for setting up guidelines for media does not exist currently and that it would amount to 'victimising the television media' if the ministry goes ahead with imposing guidelines on them by amending the Cable Television Network (Regulations) Act. "Anand Sharma sought our suggestions on the proposed amendments to the Act and we could impress upon him that it is not possible to guide the media with any number of Acts and a Media Commission is the need of the hour. He agreed with our views and said he will put up the proposal before the government," Mollah added. Earlier, efforts to form a media commission were thwarted during the NDA regime after the government could not reach an agreement over the issue. The Left parties had also put up demands for formation of a media commission through their journalists' unions in the past, citing protection for employees from privatisation and industrialisation of media. (Hindustan Times 16/2/09)

Special team to probe Pakistan journalist's killing (1)

Islamabad (IANS): A special police team has been formed to probe the killing of Pakistani journalist Musa Khankhel while he was reporting on a peace deal brokered with the Taliban in the restive Swat Valley. Frontier Police Deputy Inspector General Malakand Shaukat Hayat will supervise the team, formed on the directive of Inspector General of Police Malik Naveed. Quoting a Frontier Police official, The News said Saturday that the team would collect data on the cellular phone calls made by Khankhel to find out who was in contact with him during the last few hours of his life. "Other pieces of evidence would also be collected," the newspaper added. Khankhel, 28, was abducted and killed Wednesday while accompanying the caravan of the Tanzim Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) of radical cleric Sufi Mohammad while it was on its way to the Swat valley for peace talks with the Taliban that control the region. The Khyber Union of Journalists has also formed a three-member panel to probe Khankhel's killing. Union president Mohammad Riaz will head the panel, which will include two members from Peshawar and one from Swat. The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) will bear the entire expenses of the team during the probe, including their travel and accommodation. Riaz, according to a report in The News, will name the other two members of the team and start the investigation from

Sunday, during which the team will also visit Swat and will meet the family members and close friends of the slain journalist. They will also meet cross sections of society in the area, officials, Islamist leaders of Swat and senior journalists, the newspaper added. The team will submit its report in the Biannual Delegates Meeting (BDM), the supreme forum of the PFUJ, to be held at Faisalabad March 6-8. The PFUJ is also planning "safety training" course for journalists working in Swat and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in April, followed by another in July. (The Hindu 21/2/09)

Workshop on role of media and HIV/AIDS held (1)

GUNTUR: Media could play a pro-active role in ending the discrimination being shown to HIV/AIDS affected persons by publishing inspiring stories and articles on denial of health care, marital rights, employment and family support, speakers observed at the District Media Consultation on HIV/AIDS and NACP- 111 held here on Saturday. Additional DMHO B. Rama Devi, representatives from Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), media personnel and representatives of various NGOs shared their views and experiences over the current programmes. At the end of day-long consultations, they agreed that there was a need to scale up the medical and community services, improve the quality of health care, disseminate information on recent advances in the treatment of HIV/AIDS in rural areas and play the role of a watch dog on various intervention programmes being taken up by the Government and the NGOs effectively. Representatives of NGOs and APSACS agreed to conduct media tours to enable broad study on various issues, including communities, ART centres in various parts of the State. The Additional DM&HO said that the extension of the ART centres is on the cards and an ART centre at Tenali would be set up shortly. She added that there were proposals to start providing second line ART drugs to affected persons and highlighted various points in the National Aids Control Programme-111. Advocacy expert from United Kingdom, Lizjoles said that media in India has done an enormous service in writing about the issues relating to HIV/AIDS and said that media personnel should keep themselves abreast of various recent studies and developments in treating the infection. Journalists could also write about the support-systems being provided to HIV/AIDS affected persons, the role of State in integrating the affected into the main stream etc. Senior Journalist from Vijayawada, Ch. Satish shared his experiences in writing about MSMs, while representatives of NGOs appealed to media to be more sensitive while reporting stories on HIV/AIDS affected persons. The INP+ coordinator Jagadish, Seeds director Roshan Kumar, journalist Naren were present. (The Hindu 22/2/09)

Scribes demand change in accreditation rules (1)

Bhawanipatna: The Kalahandi Working Journalists' Association (KWJA), affiliated to the Utkal Journalists' Association (UJA), celebrated its first annual function at here. Holding placards, around 250 scribes took out a procession in the heart of the town and submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister through district Collector R Santhgopalan alleging the State Government's step-motherly attitude towards journalists. Their demand included amendment to the Orissa Accreditation of Working Journalists Rules, grant of pension, reconstitution welfare fund, granting of free travel in Government and private buses, identification and security and insurance cover to the journalists. With UJA president Manoj Das in the chair, an executive body meeting of the UJA was also held here. The members discussed about further strengthening of the association. General secretary Haradhan Banerjee tabled the annual report. The KWJA meeting was presided over by its general secretary Rajanikanta Mishra. KWJA president Sunil Nayak and UJA working president Pratap Mohapatra were among those present. A symposium on "Role of Journalists in Rural Development" was also held, in which intellectuals of the district shared their views about role of journalists. A souvenir, Bartajibi, was released by chief guest Manoj Das. Eminent persons from various fields were also felicitated on the occasion. (Pioneer 24/2/09)

Journalists assaulted by temple staff (1)

Madikeri, Feb 24 : Two Journalists were injured when they were assaulted by temple staff and public at Bhagandeshwara temple at Bhagamandala yesterday for questioning about delay in distribution of food. Basavaraj Ayatti from Savadatti and Gurubasannavar from Ramadurga (both in Belgaum District) sustained severe injuries as a clash broke between Journalists and the temple staff. About 300 Journalists, who had come here from all parts of the State to attend State level Media Conference organised by Karnataka Working Journalists Association, were visiting temples and yesterday being Mahashivaratri they were waiting in the queue for lunch in the temple. The injured were given first aid at the district hospital and a complaint was lodged with the Police. The Kodagu District Journalists

Association had organized a free visit to the pilgrim centers and the Deputy Commissioner had announced that special meals would be organized for Journalists at Bhagamandala temple. Deputy Commissioner Baladevkrishna and Superintendent of Police Suresh conducted an enquiry today and took statements from the temple authorities. Mr Suresh assured action would be initiated. (New Kerala 25/2/09)

Media houses need cell to curb crime against women: Sreedevi (1)

Kozhikode, Mar 2 : Kerala Vanitha (Women) Commission (KVC) Chairperson, Ms Justice D Sreedevi, today underlined the need for a separate cell for curbing possible violence against women scribes in media establishments in the State. Inaugurating a workshop for women mediapersons jointly organised by the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) and the Calicut Press Club (CPC) here, she said as per the existing provision, organisations with more than 30 employees on its pay roll were bound to set up such cells. The Commission, as a remedial measure, will approach the State Government to prevail upon the media houses to set up such cells for the purpose, she said. Stressing on the need for adequate security for women scribes on night shifts, she said the media organisations should also ensure arrangements for staying back or safe transportation to their residence after the working hours. Presided by Planning Commission member Mrudul Eppan, the workshop was attended by among others, KVC Member T Devi, Rukmini Bhaskar, Journalists Leela Menon and R Parvathi Devi, All India Radio News Editor K A Beena, District Information Officer P Kunhabdulla, CPC President Sudheendra Kumar and Secretary Kamal Varadoor. (New Kerala 2/3/09)

Allow international media into war zone, Vaiko urges Sri Lanka (1)

Madurai (PTI): MDMK leader Vaiko has asked Sri Lanka to allow international media and Human rights Commission into its war zone for 'proper assessment' of the situation. "This is necessary to properly assess and project the plight of the Tamils trapped there," he told reporters at the airport here on Monday. Vaiko said members of the Sri lankan Tamils Protection movement had shown black flags to External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee during his February 28 visit to Tuticorin, in protest against India "indirectly" helping the island nation by "providing arms" and accused him of "misleading" the nation on the issue. Referring to Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's threat to invoke National Security Act against him for burning the portrait of Mukherjee, Vaiko said he was not aware of any incident when portraits of Congress leaders were burnt. "But we are ready to face any action in this regard," he said. Vaiko had yesterday dismissed the issue as "intimidatory tactics" by DMK and the Congress. The Sri Lankan Army had yesterday released photographs of Vaiko with LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran, saying the MDMK chief was "photographed" in LTTE uniform, firing pistols with Prabhakaran and delivering "brain-washing lectures to the LTTE cadres". (The Hindu 3/3/09)

International Media mission call to Nepal to ensure press freedom (1)

Kathmandu, Mar 3 (ANI): The international media mission has urged the Nepal Government to ensure press freedom by shielding journalists and media houses from attacks. The mission headed by President of the Asia Journalists' Association (AJA) Sang-Ki Lee here on Monday asked the administration to bring perpetrators to justice. Expressing concern about the worsening situation of freedom of press Nepal, they urged the government to involve journalists in the Constitution-making process and enshrine press freedom in the new constitution. The mission said that the Governments must ensure physical and professional security for journalists and enforce the Working Journalists' Act and the Right to Information Act in letter. The mission has urged the government to carry out time-bound investigation into the murder of journalists Uma Singh, J. P. Joshi and Birendra Sah, and the whereabouts of missing journalist Prakash Thakuri. President of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Dharmendra Jha said the Government must end the culture of impunity for the free press to thrive. Kantipur quoted former President of FNJ and AJA-Nepal Chief Bishnu Nisthuri as saying journalists and media institutions were being targeted in the whole of South Asia. "Press freedom is not just a concern for Nepal; the whole of South Asia should fight for it," Nisthuri added. (ANI) (One India 3/3/09)

Editor's killing in Assam decried (1)

Guwahati: The Assam police will probe any links that the proprietor and Executive Editor of Assamese daily Aaji, Anil Mazumdar, may have had with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the police have announced, even as investigators recovered spent cartridges from the spot where he was gunned

down on Tuesday night. Director General of Police G.M. Srivastava said a probe had begun and primary evidence had been collected. The cartridges had been sent for forensic tests. "We've to probe all angles. It will take into consideration all the facts and evidences, including his relationship with... ULFA," the DGP said. Mazumdar had been previously arrested for alleged links with ULFA and cases registered against him. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi condemned the killing and said he had directed the DGP to arrest the culprits at the earliest. Majumder, in his late 30s, was accosted by a seven-member group as he returned from his office and opened the gates of his home. He was shot at point blank range. The body was on Wednesday taken to the office of Aaji and the Guwahati Press Club where tributes were paid. In New Delhi, the Editors Guild of India expressed shock over the murder. It said the killing exposed the failure of the government to provide security to editors. Journalists in Assam functioned under the shadow of threats, it said. They were being pressured by terrorist groups and sometimes by government agencies to write in favour of one group or the other, the Guild said in a statement. Some members of the Press Council of India had visited Guwahati and reported that the media in Assam were functioning at gun-point, the statement said. — PTI (The Hindu 26/1/09)

Attack on media (1)

The killing of Anil Majumdar, editor of the Assamese daily Aji, on Tuesday night is shocking and needs to be condemned by one and all. Occurring barely four months after the murder of Jagajit Saikia, another journalist in Kokrajhar, the developments lay bare the escalating threat to life faced by working journalists in the State. This has been a phenomenon witnessed not just in Assam but in many parts of the North-East plagued by conflict situations stemming from insurgency, secessionism, ethnic unrest and an unstable political environment. Targetting of journalists by militants and anti-socials is nothing uncommon in the region, with Assam alone accounting for deaths of as many as 20 journalists in the past two decades. And the most disturbing aspect of this gory episode is that not a single killer could be arrested till date. This testifies to the sheer inefficiency of the Government and the law-enforcing agencies in dealing with the mounting attacks on media persons. On the whole, it is a sad commentary on the prevailing law-and-order situation and the inability of the Government to safeguard the lives of the citizens. The Government must take serious note of the growing attacks on media persons and make some meaningful intervention. The culprits involved in these dastardly and cowardly acts must be brought to book and punished exemplarily. Leaving aside the law-enforcement part, civil society also needs to come out in the open to denounce assaults on the Fourth Estate. The implications of acts of violence on journalists go beyond physical attacks on individuals. An attack on media persons is an attack on the media itself – the sole intent being to put a curb on its independent functioning. A fearless and impartial media invariably clashes with the interests of perpetrators of crimes and illegal activities, who naturally resort to violence to gag the press. This has been the experience throughout the ages across the world. But history is witness to the fact that in the long run such forces never succeed; rather their attacks only serve to further strengthen the media's resolve to fight injustice and oppression. The media in the North-East – which is increasingly bearing the brunt of violence by the forces of evil – must not allow this hostility to weaken its stance against crime and violence. Being the fourth pillar of democracy, an impartial and courageous media is critical to the survival of the democratic ethos. (Assam Tribune Editorial 26/3/09)

Scribe hurls shoe at Chidambaram (1)

New Delhi: A Sikh journalist on Tuesday hurled a shoe at home minister P Chidambaram at a press conference here protesting against CBI's clean chit to 1984 anti-Sikh riots accused Jagdish Tytler but missed the target by a whisker. Chidambaram, who was addressing the media at the AICC headquarters here, was taken aback for a moment but he drew himself away from the missile hurled at him by Jarnail Singh, a reporter with Hindi daily Danik Jagran, who was sitting just in front him. Meanwhile praising Delhi journalist Jarnail Singh for his "courage and bravery" in hurling a shoe at Home Minister P Chidambaram during a press conference, Sikh political party Shiromani Akali Dal on Tuesday announced a cash reward of Rs.200,000 for him. The journalist showed his anger when Chidambaram, who had answered his questions, told him that he cannot indulge in arguments over his answers. "I protest," Singh said and threw the shoe at the minister that went past the target. The assembled gathering of journalists was surprised at the scribe's action that created flutters. "Take him away," said Chidambaram adding "please, take him gently, gently" as he was escorted out of the conference hall by two AICC staff who held him by his arms. Singh, who was later taken by police, was released as Chidambaram said he forgave him.

However, Jagran management took the matter seriously and said it was planning “disciplinary action” against the journalist for the “shameful act”. Jarnail’s mother Naseeb and wife Gurmeet Kaur felt that he should not have thrown the shoe and were thankful to the home minister for not pressing the issue. “We have not registered a case, primarily because the aggrieved party does not have any complaint. He did not want to pursue the case as it was just an emotional outburst. The aggrieved party says he is ignoring the matter,” deputy commissioner of Police Shankar Dash said. Dismissing the act, the home minister said, “I forgive him...let not the action of one emotional person hijack the entire press conference. I have answered his questions as best as I can. You are all witness to it.” Singh, however, remained unapologetic saying that his manner of protest might have been wrong but there was no other method left for Sikhs to express their feelings which have been ignored for the last 25 years. (Financial Express 8/4/09)

Cops told not to take action against scribe (1)

NEW DELHI, April 7: Fearing that taking action against Mr Jarnail Singh, the journalist who threw a shoe at the home minister, Mr P Chidambaram, during a Press conference today, might snowball into a big controversy, the top brass of Delhi Police were asked to “lie low” and avoid any criminal proceedings against him. “Do not book him for any cognisable offence,” was the direction from the top to the investigating officers at Tughlak Road Police station, who were studying various provisions of the Indian Penal Code under which Jarnail Singh could have been booked for attacking the home minister of the country. The journalist was released after two hours of interrogation by a team comprising sleuths from various Intelligence agencies. Senior Delhi Police officers later admitted that they were directed not to take any step in haste that might ignite the issue further. “We could have certainly booked him for a cognisable offence. Attacking the home minister publicly, even if with a shoe, would attract many cognisable sections of IPC. But once the HM forgives him, who are we to act,” a police officer said. The official stand of Delhi Police, however, is different. “We did not register a case because it was a non-cognisable offence. Since there was no complaint, police had little ground to file an FIR against Mr Jarnail Singh,” a Delhi Police official said. Preliminary inquiries suggested that it was an emotional outburst and Mr Singh had not planned the incident. The decision of not filing any FIR was taken after Mr Chidambaram stated he had forgiven Mr Singh and did not want any police action against him. Later, a Press statement issued by the Union home ministry refuted media reports that Mr Chidambaram refused to answer Jarnail Singh’s question on the clean chit given by the CBI to Mr Jagdish Tytler in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. “This is completely wrong. The video tape is there. The home minister answered the question fully. The gist of his answer was that: CBI does not come under the Union home ministry. No ministry can put pressure on the CBI,” he said. (Statesman 8/4/09)

FIR against Lalu (1)

PATNA: The Kishanganj police on Tuesday denied issuing arrest warrants against Railway Minister and RJD chief Lalu Prasad. A section of the electronic media had reported that warrants were issued, creating a flutter in political circles here. Superintendent of Police Ram Narain Singh said that only an FIR had been lodged against Mr. Prasad for his alleged remarks against BJP leader Varun Gandhi. The charges made were under bailable sections and no arrest warrants were issued against him. Kishanganj District Magistrate Ferak Ahmed had taken notice of the speech in which Mr. Prasad had said that had he been the Union Home Minister he would have crushed Mr. Gandhi under a roller for his alleged remarks made during his election speeches in Pilibhit. After viewing the CD Mr. Ahmed regarded Mr. Prasad’s speech — at a rally in favour of his party nominee and Union Minister of State for Agriculture Md. Taslimuddin — as an attempt to disturb communal harmony and divide society. It was forwarded to the Election Commission. Subsequently, SDO Khursid Alam lodged an FIR with the Kishanganj police against Mr. Prasad under Section 153 of the IPC and Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act, charging the Railway Minister with wantonly resorting to provocation with the intent to cause riot. The electronic media claimed on Tuesday that arrest warrants had been issued against Mr. Prasad. Mr. Singh said that he was inquiring into the matter. He pointed out that the offences under the sections were bailable. Mr. Prasad, however, clarified that he had only targeted the fundamentalist forces and underlined his commitment to bulldoze them for the unity and integrity of the country. He said that he would fight such forces till the last drop of his blood. (PTI reported that at an election meeting at Garwah in Jharkhand, Mr. Prasad said: “What I meant was crushing him under the roller of law had I been the Home Minister.”) Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said that Mr. Prasad’s statement was condemnable and underscored

the latter's frustration. The Garwah police also lodged an FIR against Mr. Prasad for landing his helicopter at the election venue instead of at the helipad. Pilot Jagjit Singh too has been cited as an accused. (The Hindu 8/4/09)

Protest against attack on mediapersons (1)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Regional chairman of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) M.P. Veerendrakumar has protested against the attack on Manorama News channel reporter S. Mahesh Kumar and cameraman V.J. Monsy in Malappuram district. The regional chairman said the attack had occurred at a meeting attended by Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan on Tuesday and that increased the seriousness of the event. The attack was over a report that had never been filed by the reporter and the cameraman. Expressing concern over increase in such attacks, he recalled that a similar attack had taken place earlier in Kozhikode. (The Hindu 9/4/09)

Mayawati violating Dutt's right to freedom of expression: Amar (1)

Allahabad: Stung by the charge of "communal speech" leveled against Sanjay Dutt, the Samajwadi Party on Thursday lashed out at the BSP government for "violating the right to freedom of expression" of the newly inducted politician. General election 2009 "I ask the Mayawati-led government, how dare it call Sanjay communal? Could there be a greater living example of secularism and communal harmony than this man who was born to a Hindu father and a Muslim mother", the party general secretary told an election meeting at Kotwan, about 30 kms from here. "By lodging a case against Sanjay, the government was violating his right to freedom of expression, granted to every citizen of the country by the Constitution. I hope Mayawati, who does not respect others, does have some regard for the Constitution which was the brainchild of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, whom she claims to idolise", Singh said, while sharing the dais with Sanjay Dutt and Rajya Sabha MP Jaya Bachchan. The SP general secretary asserted that neither he nor the members of his party would get cowed down by the "bullying tactics of BSP government" and dared Mayawati to "arrest me and Sanjay Dutt and clamp NSA on us as I say this in the open". Amar Singh also accused the BSP of having "entered a secret political matrimony with the communal BJP" and defended his own party's decision to join hands with Kalyan Singh, who was heading the BJP government in UP at the time of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. "I wish to remind our supporters that Kalyan Singh has changed his path and begun to move in the direction suggested by Mulayam Singh Yadav. He is still not a member of the SP, but only supporting us as the BJP is our common enemy". Earlier, Dutt began his speech by saying "I have come here to do Gandhigiri and not to make any inflammatory speech". In his brief address, he drew applause from the crowd by rendering some of his famous on-screen dialogues. Recalling that his mother Nargis Dutt had her roots in Allahabad, Dutt expressed hope "my nanihaal (mother's home) will shower its affection on me by voting for my party in the elections". In her speech Jaya Bachchan too described herself as the "bahu" (daughter-in-law) of Allahabad, an obvious reference to her husband and Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan who was born and brought up here, and urged the voters of the region to vote for the Samajwadi Party. She also attacked the Congress party for having failed to fulfill the aspirations of the people of the country in its five years rule. (DNA 16/4/09)

Rights group urges N Korea to free US reporters (1)

SEOUL (AP): An international media rights group renewed a call for the release of two American reporters held in North Korea for the past month, while the State Department said diplomats were continuing work to win their release. Laura Ling and Euna Lee, journalists working for former Vice President Al Gore's San Francisco-based Current TV, were arrested after they allegedly crossed the border from China on March 17 while reporting on North Korean refugees. If convicted of espionage, the women could face at least five years in prison under North Korean law. On Friday, Paris-based Reporters Without Borders called for their immediate release in a statement, condemning Pyongyang for treating the reporters as "criminals" when they were "simply doing their jobs." Their prolonged detention comes amid tensions on the Korean peninsula after the North this month fired a rocket, vowed to restart its nuclear program, said it will quit six-nation disarmament talks and kicked out international nuclear monitors. The North is angry that the U.N. Security Council criticized what Pyongyang calls a "peaceful" satellite launch. Other nations believe the liftoff was a test of its long-range missile technology. In Washington, the State Department said that diplomatic efforts to free the women were continuing. "There's a lot of

diplomatic activity going on with trying to get their release," spokesman Robert Wood told reporters Friday. The United States and North Korea lack diplomatic relations. A Swedish official has made at least one visit on behalf of the U.S. to see the journalists and Washington was seeking more such contact, Wood said. Separately, the North has also been holding a South Korean worker from an inter-Korean industrial complex since March 30 for allegedly denouncing Pyongyang's political system. Many analysts have said the North is likely to try to use the U.S. and South Korean citizens as bargaining chips for future talk (The Hindu 18/4/09)

Women's groups protest newspaper report on rape case (1)

MUMBAI: Eight women's groups on Saturday protested outside the offices of the Times Group — the publishers of The Times of India — accusing the Mumbai Mirror newspaper, also published by the group, of sensationalising the story of a rape victim and violating her right to privacy. A student at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai was reportedly raped by six men last Sunday. Following the registration of a case with the local police on Tuesday evening, newspapers in Mumbai have extensively reported on the case, featuring the story on their front pages every day since the story broke. The Mumbai Mirror on Friday published in entirety the statement made by the victim to the local police, detailing her age, her country of origin — she was an international student — and even the course she was enrolled at the TISS, an institute which does not have many international students. The statement also graphically described how the victim was attacked by the alleged offenders. The eight women's groups on Saturday filed a complaint with the police, who registered an FIR against the Mumbai Mirror, the Times Group and its owners Bennett, Coleman and Co. under Section 228 (A) of the Indian Penal Code for disclosing the identity of a rape victim, said Sandhya Gokhale of the Forum against Oppression of Women, one of the groups involved in the protest. While the newspaper did not reveal her name, women's groups said that by revealing the other details, the newspaper left no scope for her identity to remain confidential thereby violating her right to privacy. "This isn't ethical journalism at all, it's a violation of her privacy," Ms. Gokhale said. "Everyone in her college, and elsewhere, knows her identity now. This is irresponsible reporting." The Mumbai Mirror carried an apology in its pages on Saturday after many readers wrote in to complain about the graphic descriptions of the girl's rape that was contained in her statement. The women's groups said this was not enough as the newspaper apologised only for offending the readers' sensibilities, and not to the victim. "We want the newspaper to apologise to the victim," Ms. Gokhale said. The incident has ignited a debate on where boundaries lie in reporting such crimes and when newspapers should refrain from publishing information that may offend the sentiments of victims, or possibly worse, disclose their identity. Nandita Gandhi, a prominent women's rights activist with the non-governmental organisation Akshara, said this was in her opinion "the grossest incident of reporting a rape case in recent memory." "An FIR may be a public document, but it's not a document that is meant to titillate or sensationalise," Ms. Gandhi said. "The competition between newspapers is so vitiated that they are pulling out all the stops. The newspaper can argue they have not named her, but they have otherwise revealed her identity. They may have kept the law, but they violated its spirit." (The Hindu 19/4/09)

Sri Lankan editor accused of aiding rebels freed (1)

COLOMBO (AP) A Sri Lankan court released an ethnic Tamil newspaper editor on Friday after holding him for nearly two months on accusations that he aided a rebel air raid on the capital, his attorney said. Magistrate Gihan Pilapitiya ordered the release of the Tamil-language Sudar Oli newspaper editor after police investigations found no evidence to charge him, the journalist's attorney K.V. Thavarasha said. Police arrested Nadesapillai Vidyadaran on Feb. 26, six days after Tamil Tiger rebels sent a pair of light aircraft packed with explosives on a suicide mission to attack two air force bases in the Colombo area. The planes were shot down before reaching their targets and four people were killed, including the two pilots and two civilians who were hit by anti-aircraft fire. Police said Mr. Vidyadaran had suspicious telephone conversations during the attack. Thavarasha said police investigated the calls and found no grounds to charge the editor. Sri Lanka has come under heavy international criticism after a spate of attacks on and arrests of journalists viewed as critical of the government's offensive against the rebels, who have been fighting for 25 years to create an independent homeland for ethnic minority Tamils. According to Amnesty International, at least 14 journalists and Sri Lankans working for media organizations have been killed since the beginning of 2006. Others have been detained, tortured or have allegedly disappeared, while another 20 have fled the country after getting death threats, the group said. (The Hindu 24/4/09)

Media should not interpret judgements: CJI (1)

Guwahati: Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan asked the media not to interpret courts' judgements, observing it leads to 'distortion' of facts. "Very often it has been observed that media reports project a distorted version of the facts and the judgements delivered by the courts," Balakrishnan said. Addressing a workshop on "Reporting on court proceeding on media and administration of justice" and "Implementation of national rural employment guarantee scheme", he asked the media to report court proceedings 'correctly' so that common people are not deprived of justice. Urging the 'senior editors' to intervene and ensure that "wrong versions of judgements" are not reported, the CJI said there should be some "moral bindings" on journalists while reporting court proceedings. "The media is the Fourth Estate of democracy and so they have to behave responsibly and work for the development of the society and the people," Balakrishnan said. The CJI had a word of praise for the NREGA and said the scheme has been an instant success and helped in a big way in employment generation (Financial Express 26/4/09)

Manmohan: respect media freedom (1)

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday greeted journalists on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, and urged everyone to respect the freedom of journalists. In his message, Dr. Singh said the celebration of World Press Freedom Day is a reaffirmation of the world's commitment to the right to freedom of opinion and expression. "A free press makes governments accountable, increases awareness of important issues among people and benefits society. It is an essential pillar of any democracy," the Prime Minister observed. (The Hindu 4/5/09)

Media seeks inquiry on attack by military personnel (1)

Coimbatore (PTI): Media persons on Sunday sought an inquiry into the attack by some military personnel on media, who had gone to cover the blockade of a few military trucks by pro-LTTE outfits, on the city outskirts. The media persons, both print and electronic, staged a demonstration in the city protesting against the attack, in which a reporter of private TV channel sustained injuries. They sought an inquiry by an independent agency, other than defence department into the incident which they said was an assault on the freedom of the press, police said. (The Hindu 4/5/09)

Employees of newspapers, agencies on agitation path (1)

The Confederation of Newspaper and News Agency Employees Organisations has threatened to go on agitation on Tuesday in protest against the Wage Board meeting journalists and non-journalists separately. "In the past such meetings were held jointly. It is waste of time and money and an effort to delay (things)," said the leaders of the top body of employees of newspapers and news agencies, in an executive meeting held in New Delhi on Monday. Confederation general secretary M S Yadav said that all the leaders of the body have rejected the move and are going to meet labour secretary Sudha Pillai on this. If the meeting with Pillai proves fruitless, 'we would hold demonstration at the wage board office tomorrow', he said. The executive meeting was attended by Suresh Akhouri of the Indian Journalists Union, Madan Talwar of the All-India Newspaper Employees Federation, N K Trikha and M D Gangwar from the National Union of Journalists (I), M L Joshi from the UNI Workers' Union, and Ajay Kumar Tyagi and Amrit Mohan from the Federation of PTI Employees' Unions, among others. (Rediff News 4/5/09)

Lalu Prasad shuns media (1)

Patna: The otherwise media-friendly Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad shunned the media for the entire day on Thursday when polling was held for three Bihar Lok Sabha seats, including Pataliputra where he is contesting. A sombre-looking Mr. Prasad turned up with his wife and former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, son Tej Pratap and a daughter at the polling station on the Veterinary College campus where scores from the media were waiting for him since early morning. He pushed aside reporters and cameramen of television news channels. A cameraman, who managed to sneak into the room where the electronic voting machine was placed, was given a dressing down by an angry RJD supremo. The man rushed out sheepishly. Mr. Prasad has of late been complaining about getting a "bad press." — PTI (The Hindu 4/5/09)

Moon calls on member states to uphold press freedom (1)

United Nations, May 8 (PTI) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on Member States to uphold press freedoms and support the work of independent media. Speaking at a United Nations Headquarters event in observance of World Press Freedom Day yesterday, Ban said a free press contributes to democracy and stability. "At a time of economic crisis and other serious threats, it is crucial to support a free and independent media so that people can better understand the events that shape their lives," Ban said. Noting that 11 journalists have been killed this year and 125 are imprisoned, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Ban urged governments to respect the legal rights of those detained. "Journalists should be able to do their job free of intimidation and harassment. They should not have to self-censor themselves out of fear," Ban said. General Assembly President Miguel DEscoto, in a message delivered by Deputy Chef de Cabinet Sofia Clark, called for the defence of press freedoms, saying it served as "the bedrock of modern societies and the life-blood for informed decision-making". PTI (PTI 9/5/09)

Veerappa Moily removed as Cong media head (1)

New Delhi/Bangalore, May 9 (PTI) Veerappa Moily suddenly ceased to be Congress Party's chief spokesman today amid media speculation that he has been removed for his remarks against JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar, whom the party has been wooing, but he tried to dispel that interpretation. AICC General Secretary Janardhan Dwivedi has been asked to look after the work of Moily, who said this was an "internal administrative arrangement" by the party. In the morning, Moily himself said that he had given the charge to Dwivedi as he would be away in Karnataka till May 17. He has contested the Lok Sabha elections from Chikkaballapur in Karnataka and the results would be out on May 16. However, when reporters approached him at his residence in Bangalore for comments he appeared agitated terming the reports as "mischievous news planted by someone". "As I have been selected as a candidate from Chikkaballapur, somebody has to be in charge of the media cell. Dwivedi was put in temporary charge," he said. The AICC order giving charge of the media department to Dwivedi was issued on March 31 after Moily's selection as party candidate. As media speculated that the party leadership was annoyed over Moily's attack on Nitish Kumar, a senior leader said "too much is being read into" the decision to give temporary charge to Dwivedi. PTI (PTI 10/5/09)

Section of media biased against Communists' (1)

Thrissur: Purogamana Kalasahithya Sangham secretary K.E.N. Kunjahammed on Saturday came down heavily on a section of the media which, he said, was biased against the Communist movement and favoured the forces of capitalism. In a talk on 'What is happening in the media' organised in connection with the district conference of the NGO Union at the Kerala Sahithya Akademi Hall here, he alleged that a section of the media was indulging in character assassination of Communist leaders. They were using editorials, cartoons, the letters-to-the-editor columns and other the news space for this purpose. By tarnishing political activists they were carrying out a hidden agenda of promoting capitalism, he said. Mr. Kunjahammed alleged that an attempt was going on to depoliticise Kerala society, and the media was being used for this. Referring to the controversy over the SNC Lavalin case, Mr. Kunjahammed said though the media claimed that all political parties were alike, they did not treat them the same way. (The Hindu 10/5/09)

Scribes in North East soft targets'(1)

IMPHAL, May 24 – It would not be wrong to say that journalists in north-eastern States particularly Manipur are soft targets and working under pressures. Journalists' community in Churachandpur district conveyed this in an interaction with Sukumar Murlidharan, Programme Manager for South Asia, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on Friday. The Programme Manager is on a visit to Assam and Manipur to see and understand how the journalists function in the State. However, journalists who attended the interaction agreed that the situation is 'somewhat' improving after the signing of 'suspension of operation' between the security forces and the insurgent groups in August 2008. The IFJ representative handed over the seventh annual report of the IFJ for the South Asia to the leaders of Manipur Hill Journalists' Union. The report of the IFJ prepared along with the South Asia Media Solidarity Network has categorically stated about the security needs of journalists in Manipur. The situation for the media in the North East illustrates the tendency that parties locked in conflict often deny opposing sides a voice and target journalists suspected of harbouring contacts with rival groups, even if they are of a professional nature. The report highlighted the general closure of all newspapers in Manipur for 11 days

from November 20 last year to protest Konsam Rishikanta's murder. Rishikanta was a junior sub-editor of the Imphal Free Press daily in Imphal. (Assam Tribune 25/5/09)

Scribes' protest (1)

ELURU: The members of the print and electronic media based in the city on Tuesday staged a protest against the attack on the office of 'Sakshi' in Anantapur district on Monday under the joint auspices of the Eluru Press Forum and the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists . They took out a procession and submitted a petition to Joint Collector T.K. Sridevi and SP B. Balakrishna seeking stern action against the attackers. They also wanted the government's help for treatment of the reporter who sustained severe injuries in the attack. (The Hindu 27/5/09)

Scribes rally against attack on Sakshi office (1)

ANANTAPUR: Journalists under the aegis of Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) took out a procession and submitted memoranda to the District Collector and Superintendent of Police, separately, protesting against the attack on Sakshi office at Tadipatri on Monday night. A reporter of the newspaper, K. Rajasekhar, suffered serious burns after three miscreants poured petrol on the furniture, which also spilled on the reporter, and torched. He suffered about 40 per cent burns in the barbaric act. Journalists working for different newspapers and television channels participated in the procession raising slogans along the way. Activists of Congress, CPI and CPI (M) also expressed their solidarity to the journalists' community by participating in the procession. In the absence of Collector and DRO at the Collectorate, the journalists handed over a memorandum to the administrative officer. Later, the journalists continued their procession to the SP's camp office and submitted a memorandum to him after staging a brief protest there. On the scribes' request for the immediate arrest of the culprits in the incident the SP said they had already formed three teams to nab the miscreants. He appealed for cooperation from journalists to bring the culprits to book at the earliest. Meanwhile, the reporter who sustained serious burns was shifted to the general hospital at Kurnool on Tuesday morning and from there to Gandhi Hospital at Hyderabad in the afternoon for better treatment. On the other hand, Congress activists including Municipal Chairperson E.C. Venkataramana, a close associate of J.C. brothers, took out a silent protest at Tadipatri and submitted a memorandum to DSP and Tehsildar condemning the incident and seeking action against those involved. (The Hindu 27/5/09)

Senior journalist assaulted in Lanka (1)

Colombo, June 01, 2009: A senior journalist was assaulted and a respected Colombo-based civil society group critical of government polices received a threat letter on Monday, indicating that harsh times were to continue for dissenting opinion in Sri Lanka. The secretary of the Sri Lanka Working Journalist Association (SLWJA) Poddala Jayantha was kidnapped by unidentified miscreants Monday afternoon. Jayantha was severely beaten up by his abductors before being dumped on a road near his homed. He was admitted to a hospital with leg injuries. Poddala works with the Lake House group of papers owned by the government. This is the latest in the series of attacks on journalists in Colombo. Earlier in the day, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) received the letter in Sinhala by post on Monday morning, with a header that said ``notice to deshdrohis'' or traitors. It repeatedly said the organisation and those involved with it were under constant watch and alleged that it was conspiring with the international community to destabilise the country. ``We know that you have got furious of this marvelous victory of our motherland. And also we know about the conspiracies you engage in, even at the moment, in alliance with the International (community),'' the letter said. It demanded that CPA observe the ``honouring the warriors'' week, which is commencing on Wednesday, by hoisting the Lankan flag and keeping its offices closed. "Furthermore, you should certainly stop all the programmes conducted by your institute which are detrimental to the sovereignty, unitary nature, and dignity of this country," the letter said. The CPA, which is fighting a few high profile cases against the government in the Supreme Court, is not the first to get threats from unidentified quarters for being critical of the government. Several journalists have been killed, kidnapped and thrashed for criticising government policies. There are organisations like the University Teacher for Human Rights (Jaffna) – which was critical of the LTTE as well – that now function from outside the country. A handful of journalists and columnists continue to live in other countries. The murder of an editor in January is yet to be worked out. The threat letter to CPA ended on an ominous

note. "We are carefully watching your course of action in the future as well," it said. (Hindustan Times 1/6/09)

Assault on Sri Lankan journalist condemned (1)

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan police on Tuesday were yet to make any breakthrough in identifying the culprits behind the brutal attack on journalist and secretary of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA) Poddala Jayantha. According to the police, Mr. Poddala was kidnapped by a gang that came in a vehicle around 7.10 p.m. on Monday. "He was admitted to the hospital after he was dumped on the road in the Mirihana Police Division," said the police. Condemning the attack, Minister of Media Lakshman Yapa Abewardana said: "It is significant that such an attack was carried out at a time when the country is gaining repeated victories over the forces of terrorism, in our efforts to establish freedom and democracy throughout the country". In a statement, the Asian Human Rights Commission said there had been earlier attempts to abduct Mr. Poddala from his home. "This latest attack comes in the wake of a provocative campaign in which the Army commander, as well as the Inspector General of Police, has made incendiary remarks which link the critics of the government to the LTTE". "There is a permissive atmosphere to engage in acts of violence. The jubilation over the assassination of the LTTE leaders is now being manipulated to silence all dissent, particularly that in the south." Meanwhile, TamilNet quoting The Times newspaper said: "Britain sold £13.6m worth of arms to Sri Lanka in the past three years despite Colombo's widespread abuse of human rights. Whilst the United States suspended arms sales in 2007, Britain, Bulgaria and Slovakia continued to arm President Mahinda Rajapaksa's ultra-nationalist government. The sales contravened the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports that restricts business with countries facing internal conflicts or with poor human rights records and a history of violating international law." Separately, preparations are under way here for the "Victory Day Celebration" to be held at the Galle Face Green on Wednesday by the government. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has reiterated his strong concern over "unacceptably high" civilian casualties in the conflict, while rejecting in the strongest terms any figure attributed to the U.N. Briefing the General Assembly on his recent visit to Sri Lanka, Mr. Ban said media reports alleging that some 20,000 civilians may have been killed during the last phase of the conflict "do not emanate from the U.N. and most are not consistent with the information at our disposal". "I categorically reject – repeat, categorically – any suggestion that the United Nations has deliberately under-estimated any figures," a news report posted on the UN News Centre web site quoted Mr. Ban as saying. Let me also say, whatever the total, the casualties in the conflict were unacceptably high– as I have also said repeatedly," and added that during his May 22-23 visit, he pressed the government to heed international calls for an inquiry into alleged abuses and underscored the need for full accountability and transparency. At the Human Rights Council's special session on Sri Lanka last week, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said investigating abuses allegedly committed against civilians by both the government and the LTTE would help the country's transition into a new future. (The Hindu 3/6/09)

Media associations ask Lanka to ensure freedom of press (1)

New Delhi Two prominent media associations of South Asia expressed shock at the kidnapping and beating of a prominent Sri Lankan journalist and asked Colombo to resolve issues relating to freedom of media. Condemning the incident, the South Asia Media Commission (SAMC) and South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) said it was a "blatant violation of freedom of expression and independence" of media. Poddala Jayantha, the General Secretary of Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association and a member of Free Media Movement, received injuries on his head, chest and leg while he was returning from work. Six unidentified men dragged Poddala into their vehicle and after beating him up, threw him out, near a hospital. They also cut his beard and hair. "This is adding insult to injury." "After an official end of war against LTTE, the government must focus on solving the long awaited issues relating to freedom of media," Imtiaz Alam of SAFMA and Najam Sethi of SAMC said in a joint statement. This is the second major attack on journalists since January this year. On January eight, Lasantha Wickrematunga, a leading journalist, was killed. Media organisations have called upon the Sri Lankan government to make an impartial inquiry into the attack. They said lack of prosecution has enabled an environment which supports attacks and killings. (Indian Express 4/6/09)

South Asia media associations condemn attack on Sri Lanka scribe (1)

New Delhi (PTI) Two prominent media associations of South Asia on Thursday expressed shock at the kidnapping and beating of a prominent Sri Lankan journalist and asked Colombo to resolve issues relating to freedom of the media. Condemning the incident, the South Asia Media Commission (SAMC) and South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) said it was a "blatant violation of freedom of expression and independence" of media. Poddala Jayantha, the General Secretary of Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association and a member of Free Media Movement, received injuries on his head, chest and leg while he was returning from work. Six unidentified men dragged Mr. Poddala into their vehicle and after beating him up, threw him out, near a hospital. They also cut his beard and hair. "This is adding insult to injury." "After an official end of war against LTTE, the government must focus on solving the long awaited issues relating to freedom of media," Imtiaz Alam of SAFMA and Najam Sethi of SAMC said in a joint statement. This is the second major attack on journalists since January this year. On January 8, Lasantha Wickrematunga, a leading journalist, was killed. Media organisations have called upon the Sri Lankan government to make an impartial inquiry into the attack. They said lack of prosecution has enabled an environment which supports attacks and killings. (The Hindu 4/6/09)

Scribes harassed (1)

Imphal, June 04 2009: A group of media persons were delayed from reporting the various sit-in-protests carried out by students and Meira Paibis (women activists) in different parts of the State against the detention of five student leaders under National Security Act (NSA) when the Tata Magic truck in they were travelling was seized by police commandos at Canchipur, about seven kilometres from Imphal, reports NNN. The incident occurred today afternoon when a group of reporters who on their way to the Eishor English School at Canchipur to report a sit-in-protest carried out by the student were stopped by police commandos and impounded the Tata Magic truck for reasons best known to them. Officials at the Kakwa police station under which the area falls also failed to give any reason for the act of the commandos. However, it is worth noting here that the police commandos dispersed the agitating students. It may also be reminded here the five student leaders have been detained under NSA in the aftermath of the murder of Prof MD Islamuddin, proctor and from Economics Department, Manipur University (MU). Thirteen were initially arrested by security forces however eight were released after a payment of surety bond. The arrest of the student leaders and their detention under NSA had triggered loud protests in the State with various school students raising their voice against it. Meanwhile, Meira Paibis and students from various schools continue their protest Thursday demanding the release of the student leaders. They also protested the detention of student leaders under NSA and demanded further they be release unconditionally. (E-PAO 4/6/09)

MSF sponsored media coverage foiled by police (1)

Imphal, Jun 4: A team of Singjamei police led by its officer in-charge foiled a coverage tour of a media team after the police took away the vehicle of the team on Thursday afternoon. A team of media persons was on its way to cover a mass protest of school students against the killing of Prof Islamuddin in an around Imphal in a vehicle, a Tata Magic with registration No. MN04A/3064, said to be sponsored by the MSF. After being picked by the vehicle from their respective offices the media team started its coverage from Waheng Leikai. After covering several schools, the team headed towards schools located at Canchipur area, where right after their coverage at the Temple of Learning School, a team of Singjamei police headed by its OC asked whether the organizer, member of the students' body, was amidst the media persons. When told by the media team that there were only media persons in the vehicle, the OC enquired from the driver who hired him. Later they dropped the media persons at their respective offices and the police took away the vehicle forcing the media to wind up their coverage. The police also dispersed the students of ISWAR Higher Secondary School of Kakwa who were also staging a protest. (Kangla Online 5/6/09)

Bengali TV channel cameraperson beaten by CPI-M cadres (1)

Kolkata, June 4 : A cameraperson of a Bengali television channel was beaten up severely allegedly by a group of ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) activists for capturing footage of a party rally in East Midnapore district of West Bengal, police said. Diganta Manna, 24, was admitted in the ICU (intensive care unit) of a private hospital. Manna works with vernacular private television channel, Star Ananda, in East Midnapore as a photojournalist. "The cameraperson was injured in an attack by a group of political party activists. He sustained chest and head injuries. He was later shifted to Kolkata for better

medical treatment," a senior police officer said. According to police sources, the car carrying the injured cameraperson was also escorted by a district police van till Kolaghat area. (New Kerala 5/6/09)

How does the media report religion? (7)

BANGALORE: The media must look at the religious aspects informing the many issues that it covers if it is to understand and report sensitively on current political and social affairs. This view was shared by participants at a discussion organised by Convergence Institute of Media Management and Information Technology Studies (COMMITTS) in the city on Friday. The discussion followed the launch of BLIND SPOT: When Journalist's Don't Get Religion, a book edited by journalists Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Roberta Green Ahmanson. The panel discussion was moderated by independent filmmaker Nupur Basu and included social activist Asghar Ali Engineer, journalists Imran Qureshi and K.N. Harikumar, and retired High Court judge M.F. Saldanha. How neutral is the Indian media when reporting on religion-inspired communal violence? Do media and religion make for a "heady cocktail", as moderator Nupur Basu said? According to Mr. Engineer, the Indian media, both print and television, were largely unbiased, barring some organisations like Saamna. Religion was a reality that journalists must engage with, he said. Ms. Ahmansom, an award-winning journalist and author of a study on the religious context of Indira Gandhi's assassination, gave instances of the U.S. media's insensitivity to religion. A headline in a U.S. newspaper that said "Sikhs banned from meeting President" appeared to suggest that Sikhs were being discriminated against, whereas the actual fact was that weapons were not allowed into the White House, and the group of Sikhs did not want to leave their kirpans outside. According to journalist Terry Mattingly, the term "fundamentalist" as applied to groups like say the Taliban was most often not recognised by the people so labelled. "For a journalist, fundamentalist equals stupid," he said. It was a measure, particularly in the American context, of the insensitivity of the media to religion. Ramachandra Guha felt that mainstream English language reportage of religion in India was careful because it had stayed away from being aggressively atheist and pro-fundamentalist. In India, he said, it was more difficult for journalists to report on religion as there was the absence of a regulatory framework which could protect the journalist from the ire of the public. Imran Qureshi referred to the well established practice in most newspapers of not reporting the religious identity of those who participate in religious violence as an example of media sensitivity and restraint in reporting on conflict. The discussion ended with the speakers agreeing that to be truly secular, the media needed to acknowledge and not ignore religion and its role in society. (The Hindu 14/6/09)

Scribes condemn bomb threats (1)

IMPHAL, June 19: An emergency meeting of editors and the All Manipur Working Journalists Union, AMWJU, held at the Sangai Express, condemned the manner in which a previously unheard of organization called newspaper offices and claimed they had hurled a bomb at the office of the Sangai Express and that they would be attacking other newspaper offices for not publishing a press statement by them the previous day, thus spreading fear amongst the press community. A short press release after the meeting said one of the caller identified himself as Taiwan of the PULF task force. In some other offices, another caller identifying himself as Khamba Luwang of the KCP inquired why the particular press release was ignored. Today's meeting also appealed to the government to take adequate measures to ensure security to pressmen. (Kangla Online 19/6/09)

Threat to local daily for not publishing press release (1)

IMPHAL: Manipur police searched the offices of the popular English daily, 'Sangai Express', here last night after an unidentified caller informed that a bomb had been placed at the paper's office, official sources said. Sources said bomb experts searched the entire office complex but no bomb was found. A staff member of the paper said a caller, claiming to be a member of a newly-formed militant outfit, informed the paper that a bomb had been placed at the paper's premises for not publishing a press release issued by them. He said soon after they were informed, the paper lodged a formal complaint with the Imphal West district police station which despatched a posse to search the complex. The All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) in an emergency meeting late last night condemned the militants who threatened newspaper offices for not publishing the press releases issued by them. An AMWJU spokesman said the union also urged the state government to take adequate security measures to protect media persons and media houses in the state. - PTI (Business Line 20/6/09)

Media faces rebel threat

IMPHAL: Security has been beefed up to thwart attempts to target media houses and journalists following a threat call made by an armed group to carry out bomb blasts in publishing houses here. Trouble began on Friday night after an unidentified man called up a local newspaper and said a bomb was planted in the office of The Sangai Express, a leading daily, by an underground outfit. He also warned of attacking other media houses. According to sources, the local dailies' failure to publish a press statement issued by the outfit was cited as the reason to threaten the media. Minutes after the report of the news threat reached The Sangai Express office in Imphal West, its staff rushed out from the newsrooms. Police personnel rushed in and launched an extensive search operation, but found no explosive. Two years ago, a rebel group had placed a rocket grenade at the office of the newspaper for not publishing its statement. This prompted the scribes in the state to shut publication for a few days as a mark of protest. Following Friday's threats the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) convened an emergency meeting and condemned the incident. Its members appealed to the state government to arrange security and ensure that the scribes could work without fear. (Times of India 20/6/09)

Court orders journalists to vacate government accommodation (1)

New Delhi, June 21 : Delhi High Court has dismissed the plea of a group of senior journalists, who challenged the government's move asking them to vacate their allotted houses, ruling that the accommodation was not for an unlimited period. A division bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and S.K. Mishra, in a recent ruling, dismissed the plea of B.K. Mathur and Aribinda Ghose along with other journalists and slapped a fine of Rs.5,500 each for illegally occupying the premises for seven years. The court also dismissed the petitioners' attempt to link the issue of their occupation with Government accommodation with freedom of press. 'We find no co-relation between the independence of media and press with the provision of accommodation.' According to the petitioners, the government promised in its guidelines for press that all accredited journalists will be given a government accommodation in the capital if they do not have any house of their own here. The guidelines were later amended to make all those given accommodation having to pay a nominal rent to the government. The petitioner contended that since they are accredited journalists, they should be allotted the accommodation and the government's move asking them to vacate the premises was unfair. However, the court did not find any merit in this plea, saying: 'No doubt accommodation in a city like Delhi being scarce, fetters were put on rights to make out-of-turn allotments by the government. Insofar as the journalists were concerned, it cannot be said that only one set of journalists should have the exclusive privilege to continue to occupy the government accommodation only because they continue to be accredited journalists.' The appellants claim that the government found that such journalists and cameramen were rendering useful and valuable service to the society and could, thus, be treated as a class in themselves, entitling them to government accommodation at subsidized rates. The petitioner contended that since the accreditation is renewed on an yearly basis, the occupation of accommodation is directly linked to such accreditation and till the accreditation is withdrawn, the accommodation cannot be withdrawn. However, turning down the plea, the court said: 'The allotment to the appellants was never made for an unlimited period of time but for a limited period of time. Their plea that they are entitled to continue occupation till they continue to be accredited has no force in law as it is not supported by any allotment document.' (New Kerala 21/6/09)

NYT reporter escapes from Taliban captivity (1)

Kabul (AP): A New York Times reporter known for making investigative trips deep inside dangerous conflict zones escaped from militant captors after more than seven months in captivity by climbing over a wall, the newspaper said on Saturday. David S. Rohde was abducted on November 10 along with an Afghan reporter colleague and a driver south of the Afghan capital, Kabul. He had been travelling through Logar province to interview a Taliban commander, but was apparently intercepted and taken by other militants on the way. The Times reported that Mr. Rohde and Afghan reporter Tahi Ludin on Friday climbed over the wall of a compound where they were held captive in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. The two then found a Pakistani army scout, who led them to a nearby base, the Times said. On Saturday, the two were flown to the U.S. military base in Bagram, the Times reported. A U.S. military spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Christine Sidenstricker said the military had not been involved. She could not say whether the State Department or CIA had flown the two to the military facility. Mr. Rohde, reported to be in good health, said his driver chose to remain with their captors and join the Taliban. Afghan officials

confirmed the kidnapping in the days after the abduction, but the AP and most other Western news outlets respected a request from the Times to not report on the abductions because the publicity could negatively affect hostage rescue efforts and imperil Mr. Rohde's life. (The Hindu 21/6/09)

New scribes' forum formed (1)

GUWAHATI, July 1 – With an aim to cater to the needs of working journalists of Northeast India, a new forum was formed in Guwahati on June 30. The member-based organisation titled Journalists' Forum of Northeast India has been designed to work for the professional growth of its members from print, electronic and web media. A press release stated that the forum would emphasise wider interaction among journalists and also with the civil society and advocacy groups. Moreover, the forum has mandate to work for protecting the legal and constitutional rights of the journalist-members through "reasonable and justified means". Meeting in the sidelight of an ICRC media workshop for the north-eastern journalists in Guwahati, the participants from all States of the region and Bhutan decided in favour of a regional mediapersons' forum. The meeting unanimously formed a convening committee of Journalists' Forum of Northeast India with Guwahati-based Nava Thakuria as its convener. The other members of the forum are Irengbam Arun (Manipur), Dilip Sarma (Nagaland), Bijoy Gurung (Sikkim), Syed Sajjad Ali (Tripura), Pinna Kitnal Muklom (Arunachal Pradesh), David Laitphlang (Meghalaya), HVanlalnghaka (Mizoram) and Shankar Dey, Ranen Kumar Goswami, and Sailen Barua (Assam). (Assam Tribune 2/7/09)

Accreditation policy for scribes needs to be updated: IMC (1)

Ludhiana: Journalists assembled at a monthly meeting of Indian Media Centre, Punjab Chapter, here today, have expressed dissatisfaction over the attitude of the state government towards media fraternity in Punjab. The meeting held a detailed discussion on the topic 'Attitude of Punjab government towards media'. The gathering regretted that the ruling alliance in Punjab had failed to even fulfill the promises made to the media during the last assembly elections. The meeting strongly felt that accreditation policy of Punjab government needed to be amended in view of the changing scenario in the sphere of media in Punjab. It was felt that about a decade ago, there were limited dailies in the state whereas there had been a lot of expansion in the media in Punjab in the last over a decade. As a result, the number of journalists both in the field and at the desk, have increased over the period. The meeting observed that every staffer should be given accreditation by the state government. The meeting urged the state government to relax certain conditions in accreditation policy, to enable even the reporters working as stringers for dailies at district and sub division level in the state to avail the benefit. The meeting also demanded that the state government should announce pension, insurance and social security schemes for the mediapersons across Punjab. IMC national organising secretary Ashok Singhi said they would be taking up all these issues with Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal soon. The IMC, Punjab Chapter, senior vice president Dr Harjinder Singh Lall said the state government was not showing any interest in resolving the long-pending issues of the media... (Indian Express 6/7/09)

'Police, scribes two sides of same coin' (1)

BELGAUM: SP Sonia Narang has highlighted the importance of maintaining good understanding between police and media. She was speaking after inaugurating a symposium on 'Journalism and new media' organized jointly by the publicity department and the district unit of Karnataka State Journalists' Association (KSJA) to mark Journalists' Day here on Tuesday. "Journalists should highlight the achievements of the police department, and not restrict themselves to focus on only failures. I'm open to suggestions for the betterment of the department. The journalists should not sensationalize news, else the society will be affected," she said, adding: "The misunderstanding between the police and the media, if any, should not reflect in news. They are like two sides of a coin." Dr A S Balasubrahmanya, head of mass communication and journalism department, Karnatak University (Dharwad), said new-age media has made news spread faster. "Thanks to technology, people can now get information or news from any part of the world in no time," he said. KSJA vice-president Yallappa Talwar, deputy director of publicity department, Basavaraj Kambi, were present. (Times of India 7/7/09)

Aarushi case: CBI to file status report (1)

New Delhi: Even as the Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed Aarushi's father Rajesh Talwar to intervene in a public interest litigation petition filed by an advocate to restrain the media from giving adverse

publicity to the case of murder of the Noida teenager, the CBI agreed to file a status report in the more than one-year-old case. A Bench of Justice Altamas Kabir and Justice Cyriac Joseph also permitted the News Broadcasters Association to intervene in the case and granted four weeks for the parties who had not filed their reply to the petition filed by advocate Surat Singh to file their response and four weeks thereafter for filing rejoinder. The petitioner sought a direction to frame guidelines in reporting sensitive cases. The petitioner also sought a direction for setting up a five-judge criminal justice system reforms committee to enquire into why an innocent person was allowed to rot in police custody because of "bungling and mishandling" by investigating agencies. Dr. Singh wanted a direction issued to the Directors-General of Police of all States to ensure that no information was leaked to the media in a criminal case pending investigation and the police should not rush to the media until the probe was completed. Dr. Talwar, in his application said that from the averments of the Uttar Pradesh government it was clear that the police continued to vilify and tarnish his reputation by insisting in the public domain that he was guilty and was involved in the murder of his own daughter. He said the police were bent upon confusing the investigation by the CBI to the detriment and prejudice of the applicant. "It is expedient and in the interest of justice that the applicant may be allowed to intervene and be heard in the matter," he said. When the matter was taken up on Tuesday counsel for the parties said there was no objection for Dr. Talwar and the NBA intervening in the petition and accordingly the Bench issued notice for filing counter and rejoinder. Solicitor-General (SG) Gopal Subramaniam said that it was necessary to strike a balance between freedom of speech and expression and individual liberty. To a question from Justice Joseph as to what happened to the Aarushi case, the SG said he would file a status reply on the next date of hearing and the Bench directed the matter for hearing after eight weeks. (The Hindu 8/7/09)

Scribe hit for exposing migration scam (1)

SYDNEY, JULY 27: In a brazen attack, a young Indian woman journalist working undercover to expose alleged migration and education scams in Australia was threatened and punched by a man here, after which police today raided the office of an agent "exploiting" overseas students. The woman, working as a reporter with ABC TV, was trailed near her office over the weekend. Someone ran behind her and hit her hard, a colleague said. A spokesperson of the ABC network told PTI that the reporter is now "safe and sound." However, the official refused to divulge the identity of the woman scribe citing security reasons. The reporter was threatened while making her programme Four Corners related to the alleged scams, the channel said. Hours after the news about the assault broke, federal police and immigration officials raided the office of a Sydney migration agent allegedly involved in a "scam to exploit foreign students," it reported. The attack on the scribe comes close on the heels of racially motivated assaults on 22 Indian students in different Australian cities in over a month. "She was physically assaulted when someone hit her body, quite brutally, from behind and her attacker then ran away," the programme's Executive Director Mark Bannerman said. (Herald 27/7/09)

Indian journalist attacked in Australia (1)

An Indian journalist working undercover to expose migration and education scams in Australia was assaulted over the weekend following which officials Monday raided the office of an agent allegedly involved in exploiting foreign students. The Immigration Department said the raid took place in the central business district here, but did not identify the agent. ABC News Online reported that the woman was attacked possibly because of her work. She was working on a report for the Four Corners programme. "The woman was subjected to threats during the making of the programme and attacked over the weekend. Police have been notified," ABC Online said. The journalist was not identified by name. The Sydney Morning Herald said the attack took place near the ABC studios in the Inner-Sydney suburb of Ultimo. The reporter went to two migration agents posing as someone wanting to pass an English language test without having the skills and told them that she was willing to buy fake work certificates. She learnt she could do both if she paid between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Executive producer of ABC news Mark Bannerman told Times Now: "For six to eight weeks we have been working on a story to try and understand the real state of the Indian... foreign students education market in Australia. "The much more severe problem was the way they were in fact being treated by immigration agents and the colleges they had enrolled at. "We began a pretty hefty investigation and the use of an undercover reporter... What we uncovered was a range of scandals within the industry." Bannerman said the undercover reporter received phone threats indicating that "she would not be safe". "Then on the weekend she was actually physically attacked on the street. We believe that potentially possibly because of the work she had been

doing." There have also been at least 19 incidents of attacks on Indian students or their property in Australia since May 9. The attacks, in Melbourne and Sydney, have caused an uproar in India. There are about 90,000 Indians studying in Australia. The student victims have said the incidents seemed racially motivated. Gautam Gupta, adviser to the Federation of Indian Students of Australia, said about the attack on the reporter: "It is an unfortunate attack... Most people are shocked. "Our organisation has received threats in the past. I have personally received threats. It is a disconcerting development." The Four Corners programme aims to "expose a number of cases where students (coming to Australia) have lost tens of thousands of dollars", ABC Online said. To highlight the plight of Indian students, the programme spoke to the family of student Prabmeet Singh, who had spent over \$40,000 on a course at the Sydney flying school Aerospace Aviation. His mother Pushpinder Kaur said the family was now broke and her son still did not have the pilot's licence. "It is a fraud. We were shown so many rosy pictures about the school and it is not what it is really, it was just a scam," Kaur was quoted as saying. "I think the government should be more alert in these type of matters because it is the career of the children which is at stake." Other Indian students have told the Four Corners programme that the aviation college failed to deliver its promised 200 hours of flying time over 52 weeks. Aerospace Aviation's spokeswoman Sue Davis has defended the training and has questioned the level of commitment and dedication among the affected students, the report said. The programme also revealed unscrupulous practices by migration and education agents. Karl Konrad, an education and migration agent based in Sydney, says he has been aware of a black market in dodgy documents for years. "I had many students come to my offices and say, 'oh I can buy letters for \$3,000 at particular restaurants'," he was quoted as saying by ABC online. "They didn't name the restaurants, but I was getting many of these type of stories. (So) we sent that information to the Immigration Department and they in turn thanked us for the information and said they would pass it on to Trades Recognition Australia. Nothing ever became of that." The journalistic investigation followed the spate of attacks on Indian students, which also prompted the students to take out rallies to protest the muggings and assaults on them. Authorities said that Indians were the victims of crime because they were more likely than others to be travelling late at night on public transport. Australia has pulled in many Indian students with its offer of permanent residency for those who gain diplomas in vocational subjects. But then, due to the economic downturn, the government in December made it more difficult for those with vocational qualifications to become permanent residents. Monash University demographer Bob Birrell, who has campaigned against linking diplomas with visas, has warned of a backlash from Indian students who feel they have been duped by the Australian government now that visas are harder to get. "It's unlikely they are going to leave Australia without a fight," he told DPA. (Pioneer 28/7/09)

Govt seeks report on attack on journalist in Oz (1)

New Delhi: Expressing concern over reports of an Indian journalist being attacked in Australia, Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi said Monday that he was in touch with the Indian high commission there for a report on the incident. An Indian journalist working undercover to expose immigration and education scams in Australia was assaulted over the weekend. "I am not sure that there was a racist agenda behind the attack. Nowhere has it been reported in such a way, but I know some anti social elements have attacked this indian journalist," Ravi told reporters here Monday. He said he is in touch with the high commission there for a report on the matter. (Express Buzz 28/7/09)

Indian journalist is the latest attack victim in Australia (1)

Sydney: In another shocking attack, a young Indian woman journalist, who went undercover to expose alleged migration and education scams in Australia, was on Monday threatened and punched by an unidentified person outside her office here. The woman, working as a reporter with ABC TV, was trailed near her office over the weekend. Someone ran behind her and hit her hard, a colleague said. A spokesperson of the ABC Network said that the reporter is now "safe and sound". However, the official refused to divulge the identity of the scribe, citing security reasons. The reporter was threatened while making her programme 'Four Corners' related to the alleged scams, the channel said. The attack comes close on the heels of racially motivated assaults on 22 Indian students in different Australian cities over the past couple of months. "She was physically assaulted when someone hit her body, quite brutally, from behind, and her attacker then ran away," the programme's Executive Director Mark Bannerman said. "We immediately reported it to the police and they are treating the incident very seriously. As yet, no formal investigation has been launched but they are looking at the matter and taking down all the details," he said. (Mumbai Mirror 29/7/09)

Press Council Act needs amendment: Justice Ray (1)

PALAKKAD: The Press Council of India Act enacted 22 years ago was in need of an amendment to make the directives of the Council binding on all parties concerned, said Press Council of India chairman Justice G N Ray. Addressing mediapersons at the Tourism Guest house here on Sunday, Justice Ray said when the Press Council Act was enacted, the Council was chaired by a sitting Supreme Court judge. Hence, it was thought that its decisions would be binding on the media. "When the directives are binding, it will have a salutary effect on future actions. The suggestions for reforms include imposing a small monetary penalty or the withdrawal of government advertisements for a short period. At the same time, the Press Council should not be converted into a penalising forum either," he said. The Bill for amending the Press Council of India Act was before the consideration of Parliament. Sometimes the politicians themselves were not willing to take the bull by the horns, he added hinting at the reasons for the delay in taking up the Bill. He said the Press Council received more than 1,000 complaints annually. Often it was suggested that the electronic media should also be regulated so that it "does not transgress the limits". Here, the need for introspection should come from the journalists themselves, Ray said. He said instead of directly bringing in controls on the electronic media, it would be wise to constitute a media commission or expert body to study and submit a report on its functioning with suggestions. He also said that such a commission could work in tandem with the Press Council of India. In such a situation, the electronic media could hopefully agree to the recommendations of the expert body or media commission. He said the trial by the media in certain cases was exceeding limits. Many of the cases would not have surfaced at all without the revelations made by the media, he added. (Express India 10/8/09)

TV channels told to exercise restraint (1)

NEW DELHI: The Centre has informally asked television channels to exercise restraint in the coverage of swine flu stories. Given the panic following swine flu-related deaths in the past few days, the channels are being urged not to add to the sense of alarm. Instead, the I&B Ministry would like them to send out the message that swine flu is curable and that people should get tested and treated only at designated centres. Last Friday, Health Secretary Naresh Dayal had sought the cooperation of the media in containing the panic. Referring to instances of TV reporters approaching laboratories for testing and then reporting that patients were being turned away without being tested, he said: "Please desist from frivolous testing. Please remember that only those persons will be tested who show symptoms of swine flu." According to the government, India has registered far fewer cases of swine flu — including deaths — than developed countries like the U.S., the U. K., Japan, Australia and Singapore. (The Hindu 12/8/09)

Scribes hounded, movement restricted Imphal, August 11 2009: Curtailing the rights of the media, police commandos today chased mediapersons who went to cover the news report of some womenfolk, brought under security escort to submit a memorandum to the Governor in connection with the Khwairamband Bazar incident of July 23 . Taking a serious note of the restrictions placed on the movement of mediapersons, the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union has urged the Government not to impede the scribes from covering news near the CM's bungalow and Raj Bhawan. The restrictions have severely inconvenienced the newsmen in discharging their duties since August 10, it said. AMWJU further said that though the SSP of Imphal West assured in front of the Chief Minister, that a clear report on the attack at Paojel office would be furnished soon, nothing has materialised till date. Following the announcement of the Working Committee of the Apunba Lup that another mass rally would be organised today and a memorandum would be submitted to the Governor, stringent security measures were in place around the Raj Bhawan. When a group of womenfolk took out a protest rally from Keishampat Leimajam Leikai and tried to proceed towards the Raj Bhawan to hand over the memorandum, a large number of police personnel stopped them from going ahead. Afterward, five women representatives were picked up from among the protestors and they were escorted in a police van and taken to the Raj Bhawan to submit the memorandum to the Governor. On hearing the news, mediapersons rushed to the spot. But the police commandos shooed away the mediapersons twice and did not even allow them to meet the womenfolk and take photographs when they came out of the meeting with the Governor. Later, while the disappointed mediapersons were waiting for the womenfolk at Keishampat Leimajam Leikai, they were again shooed away by police commandos, who maintained that it was a restricted zone..... (E-PAO 11/8/09)

Case against journalists who 'stung' 11 MPs (1)

NEW DELHI: In an ironic twist to the 2005 cash-for-questions scam, the Delhi Police have chargesheeted the two journalists who had conducted the sting operation that led to the historic expulsion of 11 MPs. This unprecedented action against Aniruddha Bahal and Suhasini Raj of cobrapost.com is despite a Lok Sabha committee's clean chit to the duo and the Supreme Court's endorsement of Parliament's decision to expel the exposed MPs. Though the FIR lodged in 2007 was confined to the only affected MP from Rajya Sabha, Chattarpal Singh Lodha, the chargesheet filed about a month ago before a trial court also arraigned nine of the 10 Lok Sabha MPs figuring in the scam. Since the then BSP MP Rajaram Pal has been re-elected to this Lok Sabha on a Congress ticket, the police are awaiting the Speaker's sanction to prosecute him. While the 10 ex-MPs have been charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act for taking money to raise questions in Parliament, the two journalists have been accused of abetting the offence by approaching certain middlemen under the guise of a business association. The move comes even as a Lok Sabha committee had praised the sting operation saying, "A free press using fair techniques of investigative journalism is an indispensable asset to our democracy... We do not hold the media in any way to blame for exposing genuine wrongdoing. They have a duty to enquire - couple with a duty to do so responsibly - and in that way can contribute to the preservation of standards in public life." The implication of the journalists in the cash-for-questions chargesheet flies in the face of the apex court's July 29 verdict on NDTV's sting exposing advocate R K Anand's attempt to subvert justice in the BMW hit-and-run case. The July 29 judgment upheld the right of journalists to conduct undercover investigations in public interest. What is also pertinent to the cash-for-questions case is that SC rejected Anand's contention that the TV channel should have taken the trial court's permission before telecasting the sting. The FIR on the cash-for-questions scam is based on a Rajya Sabha committee report, which while recommending the expulsion of its errant MP faulted cobrapost.com for not taking recourse to a parliamentary ethics panel "instead of televising the expose in a sensational manner, thereby putting Parliament and its members on a public trial." Besides its repercussions for media freedom, the chargesheet tests the constitutional immunity against criminal proceedings conferred on legislators by a 1998 Supreme Court verdict in the JMM bribery case. Though the 1998 verdict held that a bribe-taker could not be prosecuted for anything he did in the House, the chargesheet in the cash-for-questions case does just that. This could well pave the way for the apex court to reconsider its controversial verdict in the JMM bribery case. On the basis of the chargesheet, the two journalists and 10 ex-MPs have been summoned by special judge Rakesh Siddharth to appear before him on August 20 as a prelude to the initiation of the trial. (Economic Times 12/8/09)

Two AP journalists wounded in Afghanistan bombing (1)

A roadside bombing has wounded two Associated Press journalists embedded with the U.S. military in southern Afghanistan. Photographer Emilio Morenatti and AP Television News videographer Andi Jatmiko were traveling with the military when their vehicle was struck by the bomb Tuesday. Both were immediately taken to a military hospital in Kandahar. Jatmiko suffered leg injuries and two broken ribs. Morenatti, badly wounded in the leg, underwent an operation that resulted in the loss of his foot. Morenatti, 40, a Spaniard, is an award-winning photographer based in Islamabad who has worked for the AP in Afghanistan, Israel and the Palestinian territories. He was named Newspaper Photographer of the Year in 2009 by Pictures of the Year International. Jatmiko, 44, of Indonesia, has reported for the AP from throughout Asia for more than 10 years. AP President Tom Curley said their injuries reflected "the risks that journalists like Emilio and Andi encounter every day as they staff the front lines of the most dangerous spots of the world. We are grateful for their bravery and their commitment to the news. Our hearts are with them and their families, especially Emilio's wife, Marta, and Andi's wife, Pingkan." Journalists have faced increasing danger from roadside bombs as they go on assignment with Western troops carrying out new offensives as part of the effort by the United States and its allies to turn the tide of the Afghan war. Eighteen journalists were killed in Afghanistan between 1992 and 2008, making it the 11th most dangerous country in the world for media workers, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. At least one more has been killed this year. Roadside bombs are now the cause of the majority of U.S. and NATO deaths in Afghanistan. According to figures from the U.S.-based Joint IED Defeat Organization, the number of incidents from IEDs, or improvised explosive devices, soared to 828, the highest level of the war and more than twice as many as in July 2008. (Sify News 13/8/09)

Freedom of Press being misused, says Kamal Dixit (1)

A conference on 'Missing Dimension in Media Profession' was organised here under the aegis of the Balasore branch of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya located at Jail Road. The conference was inaugurated by the former HOD of Journalism, Makhnall University, Bhopal, Prof Kamal Dixit. The speakers expressed concern over media reporting in recent times where there has been increasing incidences of vested interest. Commercialism, consumerism, sensationalism, yellow journalism, political patronage and bureaucratic interference have become order of the day. The freedom of Press is being grossly misused for selfish ends while commercial interests are greatly influencing the content of print and electronic media to a vast extent, the speakers observed. Prof Dixit, who was earlier, associated with prominent Hindi newspapers as an editorial staff, besides expressing concern over the dwindling standard of media reporting, also shared his vast experience in the field. With the bottlenecks and constraints, he emphasised on stress-free, unbiased and ethical reporting keeping the cultural heritage, values and ethos intact. He advised to meditate for awakening of moral values and spiritual strength. National coordinator of the media wing in Delhi, BK Sushant, BK Pramila, BK Nathmal, in-charge of north Orissa edition of the Samaja, Satyasiba Das and noted academician Dr Prahallad Mohanty also spoke on the occasion. At the outset, the role of the media wing of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya's Raja Yoga Education and Research Foundation (RERF) was explained to the participants. (Pioneer 12/8/09)

Govt adopting anti-democratic measures: PFI activists (1)

MYSORE: Activists of the Popular Front of India (PFI), which is under the scanner of Karnataka police over its involvement in Mysore communal clashes, on Sunday protested accusing the state government of adopting anti-democratic measures. They staged a protest in front of Meelad Bagh on Ashoka Road and raised slogans against the BJP government holding it responsible for denial of permission to hold a freedom parade in the city on Saturday. Over 200 protesters led by PFI city working president Mohammed Ataulah staged the protest for about 30 minutes condemning the government for denying them the permission. They raised slogans accusing the government of instigating communal disharmony leading to tension in the city. A protester read out a three-page memorandum during the protest in which the members have accused the BJP government of conspiring to sow seeds of discord between the communities like in Gujarat. Recollecting the incidents that led to communal tension in the city, they blamed the government for the violence that claimed innocent lives. Ayub Khan, a member of PFI, said last year they had organized freedom parade rally at Mangalore wherein over 20,000 people from across the state had participated. This year, the BJP government denied permission to organize the rally in the city, which is curtailing the freedom of expression. Ayub said they will submit a memorandum to deputy commissioner P Manivannan on Monday. In view of the protest, the city police had deployed a strong police force including personnel attached to KSRP. Two assistant commissioners of police (ACPs) supervised the security arrangements and kept a close watch. The protest hosted by the PFI on July 9 turned violent leading to rise in tension in the city, especially at Udayagiri suburbs, the epicentre of communal violence since April. However, the members dispersed peacefully after the sit-in. However, the police have beefed up the security at the sensitive places following the PFI protest. (Times of India 16/8/09)

Pakistani TV journalist shot dead: Report (1)

VIENNA: A Pakistani television journalist was shot dead as he made his way to work in the latest killing of a reporter to rock the insurgency-hit country, a press freedom group said on Monday. Aaj TV correspondent Sadiq Bacha Khan, described as a "bold reporter" by the broadcaster, was shot at least 15 times in an ambush on Friday outside his workplace in the town of Mardan, North West Frontier Province. "We call upon the authorities in Pakistan to transparently investigate the murder of Bacha Khan," said David Dudge, director of the Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI). Six journalists have been killed in the North West Frontier Province in the past two years, the IPI said, branding the region "one of the world's most dangerous for journalists". Bacha Khan, who had reported from the area for almost two decades, had been assigned to cover the funeral of an army official killed by drug smugglers, a source from the television station said. But he was sprayed with bullets as he arrived at work and died from his injuries on his way to hospital in the city of Peshawar, the source added. Pakistan's northwest has seen a wave of suicide blasts and attacks this year, most blamed on Taliban rebels avenging a punishing offensive against them. (Times of India 18/8/09)

Editors Guild condemns Delhi Police move to prosecute two journalists (1)

New Delhi , Aug 19 (ANI): The Editors Guild of India has condemned the move of the Delhi Police to prosecute two journalists who had exposed the cash for questions scam involving Members of Parliament (MPs) through a sting operation. The Delhi Police have filed a charge sheet naming Aniruddha Bahal and Suhasini Raj of Cobrapost.com. The journalists had carried out a sting operation in 2005 to prove that some MPs are in the habit of accepting bribes for posing questions to the government, while they are accepted to ask questions only in public interest. The expose resulted in the expulsion of eleven MPs from Parliament, which was upheld by the Supreme Court. Now, the Delhi Police has filed corruption charges against the MPs, but it has decided to shoot the messenger saying that the two journalists have abetted the crime of corruption. The Guild is perturbed by the charge sheet, as it sends a message that journalists who expose corruption and sleaze in high places would be prosecuted. The Delhi Police is also putting pressure on the journalists to turn approvers in the case for getting immunity from sentence. Journalists who expose corruption cannot be accused or approvers. The Guild demands that the case against the two journalists should be withdrawn, as it infringes on the freedom of the press. (ANI)(One India 19/8/09)

Expulsion is not intolerance to freedom of views: Venkaiah (1)

HYDERABAD: Senior BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu said here on Saturday that the decision of party's parliamentary board to expel senior leader Jaswant Singh from the primary membership should not be misconstrued as "intolerance" towards freedom of expression. The painful decision had to be taken as Jaswant Singh's book Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence was against BJP's core philosophy and expulsion was the disciplinary action against the member for deviating from party's ideology and line of thinking. Addressing journalists, Mr. Naidu said that as a senior leader one could express his views or dissent within the party forum but not outside. The book had views not acceptable to the BJP, whether it was about Pakistan founder Jinnah or the uncharitable remarks about national leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Partition or about 'insecurity' among Muslims. The BJP believed that people irrespective of their religion were equal and religion was a personal way of life. Mr. Singh's book was banned in Gujarat respecting the sentiments of the people and the leaders cutting across party lines, including the Congress, he said reminding that the Congress itself had banned many books — Chatrapati Sivaji, Satanic Verses and Da Vinci Code. He said there was no pressure from the RSS to expel Jaswant Singh. Asked about Jaswant Singh's remarks that L.K. Advani was very much aware of Kandahar episode when three terrorists were released by the NDA government in exchange for passengers of hijacked plane, Mr. Naidu asked why Mr. Singh had kept quiet all these years. Such issues did not have any relevance now and what Mr. Singh said did not carry conviction as he was no longer in the party. In line with decisions at the 'chintan baithak' in Shimla, the party would go for geographical and social expansion to strengthen the BJP in the southern and eastern regions and across sections of people. (The Hindu 23/8/09)

Lanka jails scribe for 20 yrs for 2 articles (1)

CHENNAI: In a verdict that shocked rights activists and media watchdogs, the Colombo high court on Monday sentenced veteran Sri Lankan journalist and columnist J S Tissainayagam to 20 years rigorous imprisonment under the country's stringent anti-terror law. The judgment confirmed worst fears of activists across the globe that Sri Lanka would make an example of Tissainayagam to intimidate other reporters and editors who have chosen to question the government's scorched-earth anti-terror campaign and practice independent journalism. US President Barack Obama had recently cited Tissainayagam as an "emblematic example" of journalists who faced intimidation and arbitrary arrest worldwide. The verdict handed down by judge Deepali Wijesundara was mainly related to two articles, which the prosecution said tended to cause ill-will among ethnic communities, and a charge, based on custodial confession, that he had raised money to fund terrorist activities. Tissainayagam had earned the government's wrath by remarking in the Northeastern Monthly that "the inability to protect its citizens has caused Sri Lanka international embarrassment". In another piece, he had spoken about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Vakarai, a coastal town in Sri Lanka's east that was a major Sea Tiger base, when it came under bombing by security forces and its starving civilian population was trapped in the midst of the war. Tissainayagam, an ethnic Tamil who wrote in English and was a regular columnist in Sunday dailies, was arrested by an anti-terrorism division of police in March 2008 but wasn't formally charged or produced in court until August 2008, when he was indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Despite calls for his release and doubts being raised about his purported confession, police went ahead with his trial. A

large number of lawyers and human rights activists were present in court when the verdict was given. One of them, Nimalka Fernando, said this was probably the first time that such a severe sentence had been given to a journalist for something he had written. "I am totally shocked as this judgment is a huge threat to the freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. I am sad as a citizen because it is the last nail in the coffin of our hope that the rule of law will prevail," Fernando said. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) dubbed the sentence "brutal and inhumane", and accused Sri Lanka of misusing anti-terror laws to silence peaceful critics. A Human Rights Watch spokeswoman said the journalist's only crime was to express his political views. "This verdict is a glaring fair trial violation and only suggests, yet again, that the Sri Lankan government is determined to intimidate independent media or any other dissident," said Meenakshi Ganguly. The IFJ said the conviction was "symbolic of crumbling press freedom in Sri Lanka, where at least eight journalists have been killed since 2007. Others have been beaten, harassed, detained and threatened with death". Many journalists, especially Tamils, have fled the country before or after the end of the war against LTTE, fearing persecution for criticising the war. (Times of India 2/9/09)

Sri Lanka expels Unicef official (1)

Sri Lankan authorities have ordered a senior United Nations official to leave the country over comments he made during the war with Tamil Tiger rebels. James Elder's visa has been cancelled over his "propaganda in support of the Tigers", a spokesman told the BBC. Unicef angrily rejected the government's "unfounded" allegations. Mr Elder, a spokesman for the UN children's agency, Unicef, updated the media on the plight of children caught up in Sri Lanka's conflict. Sri Lanka declared victory in its war against the Tamil Tigers in May. Mr Elder had raised UN concerns over the fate of children and civilians regularly during the final stages of the government assault in northern Sri Lanka. In February, he said he had seen injuries suffered by children, including "babies with shrapnel wounds, gunshot injuries and blast wounds". He also condemned the recruitment of young children by the Tigers. PB Abeykoon, an official at the department of immigration, said Mr Elder's visa had been cancelled as of 7 September and he had been ordered to leave immediately. We strongly feel that he should continue to act as an impartial advocate on behalf of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable women and children Sarah Crowe, Unicef "But the UN appealed for more time and we extended until 21 September," Mr Abeykoon told AFP news agency. He said the government's decision had been taken months earlier. Palitha Kohona, permanent secretary at the Sri Lankan ministry of foreign affairs, told the BBC Mr Elder had issued statements "which were not exactly based on facts, which were not researched, which were essentially reflective of the LTTE [Tamil Tigers] perspective". "He was doing propaganda, in our view, in support of the LTTE." A Unicef official said on Sunday that James Elder had been "Unicef's voice advocating on behalf of those who do not have a voice - children and the most vulnerable". "We strongly feel that James Elder should be allowed to continue to act as an impartial advocate on behalf of Sri Lanka's women and children," Sarah Crowe, Unicef's regional chief of communications, told the BBC. The Sri Lankan government maintained tight control over media coverage of the fighting in the final stages of the war and journalists depended on the UN and other aid officials for information. Among others, Mr Elder spoke about issues like malnutrition among children in the refugee camps which attracted wide attention. (BBC News 7/9/09)

Globalisation: challenge for media (1)

VISAKHAPATNAM: Globalisation is posing challenges to media in the area of news coverage and the Indian media is also influenced by the patterns of globalisation like simultaneously covering the global trends and its impact locally, said Shakuntala Rao of Communication of State University of New York, Plattsburgh, USA here on Monday. She was addressing the gathering at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of AU on "Media and Globalisation". Prof. Shakuntala Rao observed that globalisation also has a positive aspect of inclusive of all-all sections of world. According to her globalisation would not lead to cultural erosion and local culture has to adopt the positive aspect of global culture. Role of media had become more complicated in the era of globalisation, she felt. "The chief advantage of globalisation is that media has to improve its credibility, accountability, fairness and so on as media has to improve its credibility", she said. She was observing globalisation in relation to media during her visits to many countries. Department head Bobby Vardhan presided. Assistant professor Challa Ramakrishna and Board of Studies chairman D.V.R. Murthy also spoke. (The Hindu 8/9/09)

UK reporter freed in Afghan raid (1)

New York Times reporter Stephen Farrell was kidnapped on Saturday along with Afghan interpreter Sultan Munadi while investigating a Nato air strike. Mr Munadi - a father of two - was killed during the rescue operation. Farrell, who holds dual British-Irish nationality, said he was "extracted" by "a lot of soldiers" after a fierce firefight, the New York Times reports. Farrell, 46, had travelled to Kunduz in northern Afghanistan to investigate an air strike last Friday on two hijacked fuel tankers, in which dozens of civilians reportedly died. The Talibs all ran, it was obviously a raid, we thought they would kill us, there were bullets all around It is not the first time Farrell has been abducted on assignment - in 2004 he was kidnapped in the Iraqi city of Falluja while working for the London Times newspaper. The New York Times website reported he phoned the foreign editor of the newspaper at about 0030 BST (2330 GMT) and said: "I'm out! I'm free." Farrell said he also called his wife. In a second telephone call to his newspaper, he said he and his captors had heard helicopters approach before the rescue. "We were all in a room, the Talibs all ran, it was obviously a raid," Farrell told the New York Times. "We thought they would kill us. We thought should we go out." The reporter said he ran outside with his interpreter, who AFP news agency reports was a 34-year-old man working in Afghanistan while on a break from university studies in Germany. (BBC News 9/9/09)

HK journalists protest abuse of reporters in China (1)

Hundreds of Hong Kong journalists, lawmakers and residents marched Sunday to protest the alleged police beatings of three reporters covering recent unrest in western China, and demanded a government investigation. Demonstrators wearing black rallied outside a police station before marching to local offices of China's central government. Organizers and police estimated the crowd at 650 to 700 people. "This time the authorities are over the line," Mak Yin-ting, chairwoman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, told the gathering. "They did not only beat reporters, but blamed them for inciting the public disorder." The TV journalists were covering the aftermath of a mass protest by the majority Han Chinese in the troubled city of Urumqi earlier this month after a series of needle attacks that China's government blames on Muslim separatists. The three journalists, who worked for TVB and Now TV news outlets in Hong Kong, said they were kicked, punched and shoved to the ground by police before being detained for about three hours. However, Xinjiang authorities who investigated the matter have said security personnel repeatedly asked the reporters to leave before they were detained and faulted the reporters for "instigating" the unrest — allegations the reporters' companies say are false. "We condemn the cruel treatment in no uncertain terms," said Tom Mitchell, president of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong. Attempts to reach central government representatives in Hong Kong were unsuccessful, and phone calls to the information office of the regional government in Xinjiang rang unanswered. Unlike mainland China, the former British colony is promised Western-style civil liberties and is home to a vibrant press known for its aggressive, uncensored coverage of the rest of China. Hong Kong lawmakers, including members of the territory's pro-Beijing party, have also criticized Xinjiang authorities and made public pleas for Beijing's intervention. (Sify News 15/9/09)

Accredited journalists harassed at Vigyan Bhavan (1)

NEW DELHI: It was a classic case of the left hand not knowing what the right was doing. Senior journalists with Government of India accreditation were in for a rude shock when they were denied permission to walk across Vigyan Bhavan here on Tuesday morning for covering Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's address to the conference of Directors-General of Police organised by the Intelligence Bureau. Security personnel allowed cars with parking labels to pass through the East Gate for parking on India Gate lawns but minutes later refused accredited journalists to walk from the lawns to the main plaza of Vigyan Bhavan. They told the media persons to take a one-km detour on foot through Maulana Azad Road and reach the main entry gate even as other visitors were allowed to walk from the rear lawns to the main front gate. Even when several journalists who had been issued special cards by the Intelligence Bureau for the conference along with their Press Information Bureau accreditation tried to reason out with the security men that in the past few weeks the Prime Minister had addressed at least three major conferences at the same venue and no such instruction was issued then, they were refused permission to cover the distance on foot from the India Gate lawns to the main gate. "While I drove through the East Gate, my car was not stopped and we were not security risks, but now after parking our cars and showing our government accreditation cards and IB-issued cards we are being asked to take a detour on foot of more than a kilometre! How is it possible to reach the main plaza in time," asked a

senior journalist who was, like others, invited for covering the morning session of the conference. Harried journalists made frantic phone calls to the Officer on Special Duty at the Union Home Ministry and Additional Director-General (Media) but the policemen refused to budge saying they had no instructions from higher-ups. Special Protection Group (SPG) officials who manned the main plaza and frisked the journalists said they were unaware of any such instruction. Inside, senior IB officials also pleaded ignorance. So was it an overzealous Delhi Police who messed it up? (The Hindu 16/9/09)

Tharoor apologises for “cattle class” remark (1)

NEW DELHI: Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor “tweeted” his apology around midnight to all those hurt by his “cattle class” remark. Mr. Tharoor’s apology, sent from Liberia, came a day after the Congress publicly reprimanded him for having said that he would travel “cattle class in solidarity with all our holy cows” in a message posted on Twitter, a social networking site. Having learnt “belatedly of fuss over my tweet” in reply to a journalist’s question whether he would travel “cattle class” to Kerala, Mr. Tharoor said the phrase, ‘cattle class’ was used by the scribe, and he had only repeated it. Further, according to the Minister, “it’s a silly expression but means no disrespect to economy class travellers; only to airlines for herding us in like cattle.” Of the view that many had misunderstood him, Mr. Tharoor, in another tweet, said he had been told it sounds worse in Malayalam, especially when said out of context. “I now realise that I shouldn’t assume people will appreciate humour. And you shouldn’t give those who would wilfully distort your words an opportunity to do so.” In yet another reply to a query from one of his 169,096 followers on Twitter, he said: “Holy cows are NOT individuals, but sacrosanct issues or principles that no one dares challenge. Wish critics would look it up.” (The Hindu 19/9/09)

Scribes protest against not being allowed to cover proceedings (1)

Vijayawada, Sep 22 : Journalists staged a protest by charging the police with not allowing them to cover the proceedings today as part of the ten-day Dussehra festivities at the Kanakadurga temple atop the Indrakeeladri Hill here. The trouble started when the scribes entered the temple with media passes issued by the Vijayawada Sub-Collector. But, the police present there restricted them. The journalists had heated arguments with the police over the issue. In the process, a constable reportedly assaulted a journalist. The Circle Inspector of a local police station present there also did not pay heed to the journalists’ plea to cover proceedings. Instead he reportedly dared the scribes to complain to the City Police Commissioner K V Rajendranath Reddy over the issue. The journalists finally decided to discharge their duty by wearing black badges in protest against the unruly behaviour of the police towards them. Meanwhile, official sources said Andhra Pradesh acting Chief Minister K Rosaiah would present ‘Pattu Vastrams’ (Silk Robes) to Goddess Kanakadurga on ‘Moolanaksahtram Day’ (birth star of Goddess Kanakadurga) on September 25. (New Kerala 22/9/09)

Media persons manhandled in Sony TV audition (1)

Bhopal, Sept 24: There was utter chaos in the audition programme of Sony TV when the security guard deployed outside the venue of programme manhandled media persons and snatched their cameras. The incident took place on Thursday afternoon at Samanvay Bhavan premises when pressmen were having a dialogue with the children who had come to take part in the audition. On receiving the news of beating of pressmen senior police officers reached on the spot and sorted out the problem. In this assault about four persons were injured who have been admitted to a private hospital for treatment. TT Nagar Police have registered case against the organisers of the programme and initiated process for their arrest. According to police audition of a programme of Sony TV was supposed to be held in Samanvay Bhavan. For this purpose members of the organisation had emailed a press note to media and they were invited. Electronic and Print media persons were present for the coverage. When the pressmen tried to enter the building the security guard present there stopped them. Pressmen accepted what the security guard stated and came outside and started talking among them. The guard got annoyed with the media personnel and did obscene behaviour with the media and thrashed the pressmen. Later security men snatched cameras of the pressmen. Seeing the dispute getting intensified people informed the police. Receiving information police reached at the site and pacified the people. But when the issue could not be sorted out then the pressmen informed their seniors about the incident. In the incident press persons Anil Tavere, Monica and two others were injured who have been admitted to a hospital for treatment. SP Jaideep Prasad, additional superintendent of police new City Ruchi Shrivastava and many other police

officers reached on the spot and tried to sort out the dispute. But when the dispute went out of control then police took pressmen to police station. (Central Chronicle 24/9/09)

Miscreants raid Manipur newspaper offices (1)

IMPHAL: The All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) has taken a serious view of bullying of editors and journalists by miscreants who raided some newspaper offices on Saturday to protest against what they said were "unfounded and baseless reports." Two persons were injured and buses damaged in stone throwing when the miscreants, numbering over 300, were returning home after attacking the newspaper offices on Saturday night. An AMWJU release said if the miscreants did not tender an apology for their act and withdraw leaflets condemning newspapers, the print and the electronic media would boycott all press releases and functions of non-governmental organisations in the Thoubal constituency, represented by Chief Minister Okram Obobi. ((The Hindu 29/9/09)

NDTV Imagine moves high court against ban on Pati Patni Aur Who (1)

New Delhi: Media entertainment firm NDTV Imagine has moved the Delhi High Court against the order of the commission for child rights asking the channel to stop telecasting popular reality show Pati Patni Aur Woh. Seeking a stay on the order passed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on September 30, the company said the commission had no jurisdiction to pass such an order. "The said order has been clearly in violation of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 because the act does not give any jurisdiction to the commission to pass orders against citizens," NDTV Imagine said in its petition to the high court. NCPCR had directed NDTV Imagine to stop the show, which features item girl Rakhi Sawant and is based on BBC Worldwide's Baby Borrowers for using toddlers violating child rights. The company also said no reasons were provided for passing the order nor was it given a chance to represent its views. "No opportunity at all was afforded to the petitioner (NDTV Imagine) before passing the order." It also claimed that NCPCR could only recommend an action to the Centre, Supreme Court or the High Court but has no authority to pass an order itself. NDTV Imagine in its petition said there was no violation of child rights as "parents make a voluntary offer of their children for the role." "The choice of the child is based upon various factors, including the child's feature. After the child is chosen an agreement is entered into with the parents for the programme," said the media company in the petition. "There is no nudity or illegal activity done on the child. During the production and the shooting parents are on the site, medical facilities are on the site ... the child's well-being is taken care of by the celebrity couple," the company said. "No money was paid to the parents of the children. They are only given a minimum amount to cover their travel expenses. Therefore there was no exploitation of the children," the channel said. The matter will be listed for hearing tomorrow.(DNA 5/10/09)

Scribes stage protest in TN, film stars thank CM (1)

Chennai, Oct 9, : The standoff between the media and the Tamil film industry intensified on Thursday, with the scribes holding street protests against the arrest of B Lenin, news editor of popular Tamil daily 'Dinamalar', and the film artistes sticking to their demand for a public apology. Lenin was picked up by the Central Crime Branch Police on Wednesday for writing a defamatory article casting aspersions on some film stars. Later, he was remanded in judicial custody. He was charged under the Tamil Nadu Harassment of Women (Prevention) Act. The Madras Union of Journalists and the Chennai Press Club strongly condemned the arrest and demanded his immediate release. After a protest meeting at the Press Club premises, the journalists staged a road roko. The scribes hit out at the police for entering a newspaper's office and arresting its news editor, when 'Dinamalar' had already published an apology for publishing an "unverified report". The Tamil Nadu government "should interfere" in this matter to get the journalist released and Kollywood should also give up "its confrontationist approach" towards the media, the Chennai Press Club said in a statement. "It appears that the police have been acting under some pressure," Walter Scott, senior journalist, said. When the SIFAA members met the city police commissioner two days ago, the latter had clearly said that the members of the film fraternity could individually seek a judicial remedy by filing defamation complaints against the newspaper, Scott said. Despite this, the arrest of Lenin showed "they acted under pressure" after top film personalities led by Rajnikanth and others held a protest meeting, virtually goading the government to take some action or the other, he pointed out. Meanwhile, a contingent of the South Indian Film Artistes Association (SIFAA), on whose complaint the police arrested Lenin, led by actor Sarath Kumar met Chief Minister M Karunanidhi on Thursday to "thank" the government for the prompt action. The newspaper publishing a "small apology

in an unseen corner will not do,” as the article had already damaged the artistes’ reputation, Sarath Kumar told reporters after the meeting. The paper should come out with a public apology in bold letters, he demanded. However, he said the film industry needed the support of the media. “We still need the media’s support (for our films),” he said. (Deccan Herald 9/10/09)

Journalists protest against the arrest of Lenin (1)

VELLORE: Journalists representing various newspapers and periodicals and television organisations staged a demonstration in Fort Round Road here on Saturday, condemning the arrest of B. Lenin, news editor, Dinamalar, Chennai on Wednesday. The latter was arrested in Chennai, following a demand from film actors who urged action against the newspaper for publishing a report on film stars based on a statement purported to have been made before the police by actor Bhuvaneshwari who was arrested on charges of running a prostitution ring. (Mr. Lenin was released on bail on Friday). The demonstrators also condemned the film actors for speaking in a disparaging manner about journalists and their family members during the agitation staged by the actors in Chennai. Besides journalists, representatives of various political parties and trade unions spoke at the demonstration venue, expressing solidarity with the agitating journalists. A. Varadarajan, Tamil Nadu State general secretary of the Janata Party and Kutty, social enthusiast of Katpadi, urged the Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, who is a journalist himself and also a member of the film fraternity, to solve the problem amicably between the film actors and the journalists. I. Elangovan of the Association of University Teachers said that Mr. Karunanidhi should remember that it was the Press, which crusaded against Emergency in 1975. C. Krishnan, Vellore district president of the Tamil Nadu Traders Association, Gnanavel, district secretary of the association and Ramamoorthy, a representative of the Joint Action Council of Teachers Organisations (JACTO) spoke. Earlier, the journalists raised slogans in support of their demands.(The Hindu 11/10/09)

Call to focus on women, human rights issues (1)

GUWAHATI, Oct 10 – “Its high time our journalists worked hard to highlight the hitherto sidelined issues related to human rights and women through investigative journalism and meticulous reporting, sending the right message among the masses”. Dr Jeuti Barooah, Director of Law Research Institute, Gauhati High Court observed this while speaking at the Kunjabala Devi and Pabindra Nath Sarma Memorial Awards function here today. The tenth Kunjabala Devi Memorial Award for investigative journalism on women issues and the fourth Pabindra Nath Sarma Memorial Award for investigative journalism on human rights and civil liberties were formally conferred on Chandan Sharma and Debajit Sarma, respectively. The awards consist of Rs 15,000 and a citation each. Sharing her experience as a researcher, Dr Barooah mentioned that lack of consciousness among the general people about human rights made them more vulnerable to suffer violation of their rights. Pointing out different legal provisions for the protection of the girl child, women and elderly people in their own homes, she added, “Our families are now governed by legislations instead of love, respect and spiritual feeling towards each other, which is very painful.” The award function was presided over by Bhriku Mohan Goswami, eminent educationist and folklorist, who in his address, spoke about the life of freedom fighter and lawyer Pabindra Nath Sarma and his wife Kunjabala Devi, who stood by her husband through thick and thin. TG Baruah, chairman of the Assam Tribune group of newspapers, speaking as the distinguished guest of the occasion, mentioned that both the topics of the awards encouraged the journalists to highlight two of the most important aspects of the society. PJ Baruah, convener of the award committee, while delivering his welcome address, said that both the awards over the years had acquired encouraging response from the journalists of the State. “Investigative journalism entails a lot of hard work, time and funds. However, the newspaper organizations and managements also need to support and encourage their journalists for doing such in-depth stories,” he added. Debajit Sarma achieved this award for the third time in succession for highlighting issues like begging racket in Guwahati, impact of big malls on the petty traders, and racket of spurious drugs, among others. Chandan Sarma, in his reports has highlighted the women issues including dowry deaths, women trafficking, condition of sports women in Assam, and security of women from the North-east in metro cities. Both the journalists thanked the organizers for the awards in their address.(Assam Tribune 11/10/09)

Two scribes harassed by police commandos (1)

Imphal, October 11 2009: Two working scribes were detained for about an hour by a team of Imphal West Police Commandos at about 10 pm yesterday on BT Road near the by-lane to Paona Bazar. Strongly

condemning the ill-treatment towards the scribes, All Manipur Working Journalists' Union, at a meeting held today, has resolved to stop publication of news related with Chief Minister O Ibobi, who is also looking after the charge of Home Department and his council of ministers, along with news related with the government developmental works till appropriate action is initiated against the high-handed police commandos involved in the incident. The detention and ill-treatment towards the two scribes, A Birjit of Kangla Pao and Priyo Achom of Image TV, took place last night at about 10 pm when they came back home after duty of the day, AMWJU stated. Even though, they identified themselves to be reporters and returning home after work of the day, apparently drunken police commandos interrogated them by standing apart, the statement of the AMWJU added. The police commandos on duty, who alleged journalists maintaining link with the undergrounds, conducted body search for any illegal documents. One of the police commandos not only kicked at one of the reporters but also threatened to shoot at by keeping his gun point at his head. The police commando personnel with proud told them that when shoot to death them there none to stand against him. Later with a warning to shoot at if they come on that side after 10 pm in future by standing with one leg only, the police commandos set them free. The scribe body take seriously on the dealing of the police commandos towards the two reporters and strongly condemned the high-handed indiscipline manners of the police which acted like gunda, AMWJU stated. AMWJU treated the action of the police commandos towards the scribes as part of arrogance manner of the force. Police commandos biting people they show has turned towards the Press-Media too. The incident is after the recently instant of threatening media houses by residents of Thoubal Leishangthem and Thoudam backed by police and distributing leaflet against the press. The incident of threatening and harassing of media persons coming back from their duty using unpleasant words has showed that Manipur police is indiscipline "Rogue Police Force". Now, it has been felt that higher rank police officers instructed their personnel to threaten press-media people when got the chances. The incident showed that an end to the high-handed attitudes of the police personnel could not be rectified by taking up only the police commando personnel involved in yesterday's incident. For making state police, a force respecting the people, press and others, there is the need of correction of personnel of all ranks in the state police force, AMWJU feels. The meeting of the AMWJU observing this has decided to press the government to take up appropriate action to the police commando personnel involved in the incident of harassing the two scribes occurred last night between Shamumakhong and by-lane to Paona from BT Road. Considering the need of correction of the police force from ill-treating and disrespecting the people, the meeting also resolved to press the government to make a policy to rectify the police force. Till the demands are translated into works, AMWJU will boycott chief minister O Ibobi who is also in-charge of the state home department, his council of ministers and suspension of publication of news reports related with the developmental activities of the government effective from today, the statement added.(E-PAO 12/10/09)

No sign of Gajapati scribe Choudhury's release (1)

Bhubaneswar: It was another frustrating day with no clear assurances that Laxman Choudhury would be released from jail, despite very senior police officials' promise that the sedition charge against the journalist of Gajapati district would be dropped. Seemingly, the Gajapati police desperate to save their skin, have been caught red-handed while playing foul. They have no evidence against Choudhury other than the packet containing Maoist leaflets, which was sent to him by the ultras. On Friday, journalists had shown the Chief Minister a similar packet addressed to a Bhubaneswar-based journalist and containing the same leaflets. It was the Postal Department which delivered the packet! The poor bus conductor, who acted as the courier, has been arrested and is in jail while no action has been initiated against the city-based journalist or the courier, the Department of Posts of the Government of India! Laxman Choudhury had invited trouble for himself. He had the courage to inform the SP and the Collector of the district about the ganja mafia which enjoyed a free run in Gajapati by bribing the police. He had also written about the complicity of the local police in cases of trafficking in women. That is why he incurred the wrath of the police. As simple as that! Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik promised a four-member media delegation, which met him on Friday, that an RDC-level probe would be ordered into allegations. RDC Southern Division would inquire whether Choudhury's arrest was an act of vengeance on the part of corrupt police officials, who tried to terrorise him into silence. According to observers, journalists need to follow this up and ensure that the khaki-clad babus pay for their revengeful action. Members of the media also need to find out whether the police plotted against Choudhury for exposing their illegal nexus with the ganja trade and other criminal elements. Scribes also need to tell the Chief Minister that his writ does not run in the

State. The police officers have openly defied his instructions to drop the 'ridiculous' charges against Choudhury and that they manage to do it without any sense of fear. Who are the people resisting the Chief Minister's decision to drop the atrocious charges against the journalist, especially when the police have clearly failed to stitch together any credible evidence of his so-called Maoist links? Journalists have proposed to hold a meeting near the Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar on Monday morning to take stock of the situation as they consider Choudhury's arrest as a test case for them. The meeting will decide whether the Fourth Estate would exercise its freedom in the State or would be subjugated to the babudom and police excesses. (Pioneer 12/10/09)

Wives of journalists take Tamil actors to court (1)

Chennai, Oct 15 : The war between Tamil actors and journalists in Tamil Nadu took a new turn Thursday as six reporters as well as the wives of two scribes filed a complaint in a court against the alleged derogatory and defamatory speeches by the artistes. The complainants said they were deeply hurt after hearing the alleged derogatory speeches by Tamil actors against journalists and their families last week, M.K.S. Sundar, counsel for the petitioner, told IANS. The complaints have been made against actors Sarath Kumar, Radha Ravi, Vijayakumar, Arun Kumar, Surya, Vivekh, Satyaraj and Sripriya. The confrontation between the actors and the media began when a newspaper alleged that some leading lights of the Tamil movie world were linked to a prostitution racket. The report was based on a statement by an actor, Bhuvanewari, who was arrested in Chennai for running a call girl racket from her house. But the daily published an apology to the actors the next day. However, angered by the report, an actors' body filed a police complaint against the daily, resulting in the arrest and jailing of the daily's news editor B. Lenin. He got bail Friday. Sundar said the petition has been admitted and the judge has posted the case for hearing Nov 13. (New Kerala 15/10/09)

Sri Lanka arrests editor over military rift story (1)

A Sri Lankan editor was arrested for reporting on an alleged rift between a senior military commander and the government after the defeat of the Tamil Tiger rebels, police and his newspaper said Sunday. Chandana Sirimalwatte was held for questioning after police raided the offices of his "Lanka" newspaper, a spokesman for the paper said. Police spokesman Nimal Mediwaka confirmed that the editor was arrested on Saturday, but declined to say why he was taken in. The newspaper, which is closely linked to the opposition JVP, or People's Liberation Front, said Sirimalwatte had been questioned about a story in Friday's edition. The paper had alleged there were attempts to discredit Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka, who played a key role in the military's victory over Tamil rebels in May, after he reportedly refused to accept a civilian job. There is no official censorship in Sri Lanka, but many mainstream media organisations practise self-censorship fearing reprisals from the authorities. Tamil editor J.S. Tissainayagam was sentenced in August to 20 years of hard labour on charges of supporting terrorism, sparking protests from the US government and the European Union. In January one editor fiercely critical of the government, Lasantha Wickrematunga, was shot dead near his office. Government figures show nine journalists have been killed and another 27 assaulted in the past three years, while activists say over a dozen journalists have been killed. (Sify news 18/10/09)

Report: Media freedoms shrink in Iran, rise in US (1)

Iran's crackdown on journalists amid postelection protests and Israel's squeeze on media during its Gaza offensive drew black marks Tuesday from a watchdog monitoring media freedoms worldwide. Both countries' standings fell on Reporters Without Borders' annual ranking of press freedom worldwide. The United States came in for rare praise from the Paris-based group, rising from No. 40 on last year's ranking to No. 20 this year. The group attributes the rise to more relaxed attitudes toward the media under President Barack Obama. But it warned, "The attitude of the United States toward the media in Iraq and Afghanistan is worrying," noting that a number of journalists were arrested or injured by the U.S. military over the year period ending Aug. 31. The group, also known by its French acronym RSF, compiles data on attacks, arrests, laws and overt or covert censorship in determining its list. European countries led the list of 175 countries, with Denmark, Finland and Ireland the top three. The bottom three countries remained unchanged from the previous ranking: Eritrea, North Korea and Turkmenistan. Just above them was Iran, at 172nd, dropping from the previous ranking after protests following June presidential elections that saw a crackdown on media coverage. In a bid to restrict information about the protests, Iran's government barred foreign media from reporting and taking pictures and video on the

streets, and authorities blocked many online reports and arrested several bloggers and journalists. "Automatic prior censorship, state surveillance of journalists, mistreatment, journalists forced to flee the country, illegal arrests and imprisonment — such is the state of press freedom this year in Iran," the report says. The group also criticized Israel for restricting journalists during the offensive in the Gaza Strip. Israel sank to 93rd place overall. "This nose-dive means it has lost its place at the head of the Middle Eastern countries," the group said. Israel is now ranked behind Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. RSF said three journalists were killed covering the Gaza offensive, 20 wounded by Israeli forces and five were arrested. Somalia was the world's deadliest country for reporters over the year, with six journalists killed. Russia dropped 12 places after new killings and attacks on journalists, the report said. The group cautioned democracies in South Korea and France, both of which saw arrests and investigations of journalists last year. "How can you condemn human rights violations abroad if you do not behave irreproachably at home?" Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Jean-Francois Julliard asked in the report. (Sify News 20/10/09)

State scribes to surrender I-cards to DIPR tomorrow (1)

Imphal, October 25 2009: As part of the boycott agitation launched by the Imphal-based journalists against the state government, the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) and Editors of newspapers have decided to surrender their identity cards issued by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Government of Manipur to its Director at 11 am of Tuesday, October 27 . The decision was taken at a meeting of AMWJU and Editors held at the Manipur Press Club at Major Khul this evening. Even after surrendering the identity cards of the journalists to the DIPR, if the government still remains silent, then the AMWJU will take steps to return the building of Manipur Press Club given to the Union by the government of Manipur to the authority, the meeting decided. The decision of surrendering the identity cards to the DIPR has been taken since the journalists are feeling insecure by possessing the identity cards, stated a press release issued by the general secretary of AMWJU, Yambem Henry. It stated, even though two journalists had identified themselves as journalists by producing their identity cards, some personnel of Manipur police commandos had threatened them with shooting them to death on the night of October 10 on BT road, Imphal. The journalists have brought the incident to the notice of the state government. However, the government has remained silent which makes the journalists feel scared. Therefore, in order to save themselves (the journalists) from being threatened to be shot dead by police commandos, the AMWJU and the Editors jointly resolved to surrender the identity cards, stated the press release. (E-PAO 26/10/09)

Media should not compromise while reporting fact (1)

HYDERABAD,: Media should present only facts and guard against putting out wrong stories, Chief Minister K Rosaiah said here today. Expressing regret over the practice of clubbing news and interpretation, Rosaiah said editorial comment should be given separately. "Because news is interpreted, many times it is difficult to make out what is news and what is interpretation. I feel comment on the news can be given separately," he said. He suggested them to be vigilant in covering news but ensure that they do not cause problems for others. Inaugurating the first conference of Andhra Pradesh Working Journalists Federation (APWJF) at RTC Kalavedika in Baghlingampally here today, Rosaiah pointed out that media has also undergone a sea change. He said that journalists should maintain ethical values and work for the needy. He assured that the State Government would do the needful for the welfare of journalists but suggested the managements and journalist unions to find a solution for ensuring good salaries for reporters. Speaking on the occasion, the APWJF leaders urged the Chief Minister to provide pensions for retired journalists. They also asked the Chief Minister to give equal priority to all journalist unions. The Chief Minister and Minister for Information and Public Relations J Geeta Reddy assured to look into the demands of the Federation. CPM State secretary BV Raghavulu, BJP State president B Dattatreya, Telugu Desam Party leader G Muddukrishnama Naidu, Lok Satta Party president Jayaprakash Narayan, Praja Rajyam Party leader C Ramachandraiah, APWJF president Parameswar Rao, general secretary G Anjaneyulu also spoke on the occasion. Later, a seminar on the 'Role of Media in the current society' was held. About 1,500 journalists took out a rally from the RTC Kalavedika to Sundarayya Park at Baghlingampally via RTC crossroads, Chikkadapa li y and Narayanguda. (Express Buzz 4/11/09)

Protesting lawyers assault scribes in Karnataka High Court (1)

Bangalore, Nov 9 : A senior television journalist and a cameraman of a leading English news channel were beaten up Monday in the Karnataka High Court by a group of lawyers protesting the continuation of controversial Chief Justice P.D. Dinakaran, who faces allegations of land-grabbing and amassing disproportionate assets. The incident occurred in Dinakaran's courtroom amid chaos when cameraman Venkatesh was talking on his mobile as the lawyers had laid a siege to prevent the proceedings. As cameras are not allowed inside courtrooms, some lawyers thought Venkatesh was capturing the scuffle that broke out between the advocates on his mobile and started beating him. In the melee, his shirt was torn and he was injured, suffering bruises on his neck and back. When the journalist, who declined to be named, rushed to Venkatesh's rescue, he too was assaulted by a group of advocates. After a miffed Dinakaran left the courtroom in a huff, expressing displeasure over the lawyers' boycott call, a section of advocates turned their ire on media personnel covering the event. Condemning the assault, about 60 media persons, including photo-journalists, television cameramen and reporters staged a demonstration outside the high court and called for action against the advocates who beat up Venkatesh and the journalist. As the high drama and the ugly scenes in the high court premises were relayed on local channels, state Law and Parliamentary Affairs minister S.Suresh Kumar rushed to the spot to inquire into the incident and pacify the media. Regretting the incident, the minister told reporters the assault on scribes was unfortunate and should not have happened. "It is not befitting for a noble profession. I will look into the matter and direct the police to nab the culprits," Kumar said. A complaint was also filed in the police station against the unidentified advocates who assaulted the duo. The Advocates Association of Bangalore (AAB), which gave the boycott call, apologised to the media for the unfortunate incident. "Those lawyers who assaulted Venkatesh and the journalist are not members of our association. In fact, we were protesting against their presence in the courtroom as none of their cases were listed or were being heard by Dinakaran. We have learnt later that about 30-40 advocates, sympathetic to Dinakaran, had assembled in the courtroom to create trouble," AAB general secretary R. Rajanna told IANS. In the ensuing chaos, Justices Gopla Gowda and B.V. Nagarathna were also manhandled by a section of the lawyers. (New Kerala 9/11/09)

Gondia DDR forced to apologise to scribe (1)

GONDIA: The District Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DDR), Gondia, Sanjay Kshirsagar had to apologise to media persons on Monday for asking a reporter to leave a meeting being held in his chamber. He had asked a local correspondent to leave the chamber during scrutiny of nomination papers for the elections being held at the Janata Co-operative Bank, Gondia. The scrutiny of nomination papers for the elections to the Janata Cooperative Bank was going on at the office of the DDR on Monday. The nomination papers of a contestant, Munaf Qureshi, were rejected on the basis that his account did not have adequate balance. A journalist, who was also a contestant, was present there and intervened by asking for a clarification. As soon as the journalist identified himself, the DDR immediately asked him to leave the office. Qureshi himself and other journalists who were present there objected to this demand, and the proceedings of the meeting were held up. The DDR later apologised to the journalist.(Times of India 11/11/09)

Journalists condemn expulsion of reporters from Indonesia (1)

Foreign journalists based in Indonesia condemned Thursday the deportation of two reporters from Italy and India who had covered a recent Greenpeace demonstration. Raimundo Bultrini of the Italian l'Espresso weekly and Kumkum Dasgupta, an editor with the Hindustan Times, were forced to leave the country on Wednesday, The Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Club (JFCC) said in a statement. "The Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Club is deeply concerned about the detention and deportation of two foreign journalists who were reporting on a Greenpeace protest against deforestation in Indonesia," it said. "Free reporting and movement of the media should be protected as a cornerstone of democracy. We strongly protest the apparent violation of press freedom and request immediate clarification from immigration authorities." Police detained the journalists and questioned them for several hours on Monday after they tried to report on uncontrolled deforestation in Pelalawan district, Sumatra island. They were told they would be deported for failing to obtain local permission to be in the area, but the JFCC said there was no such requirement. "Local immigration officials say the two had obtained journalist visas from national authorities... By obtaining the visas they showed their respect for Indonesian laws and regulations," it said. "We at the JFCC would like to know on what grounds the two journalists were expelled. What exactly were their 'illegal activities' and on which law or regulation were the deportations

based?" The Reporters Without Borders media rights watchdog said Tuesday it "deplores" the arrests and accused police of acting on behalf of powerful pulp and paper companies. "These arbitrary arrests of accredited journalists are unacceptable. Do we have to point out that the police are not supposed to take their orders from industrial conglomerates?" it said in a statement. (Sify News 19/11/09)

Scribes protest attack on TV channel's office (1)

MUMBAI: A large number of mediapersons on Saturday congregated to protest attacks by Shiv Sena activists on the IBN-Lokmat television channel office in Mumbai and IBN-7's office in Pune a day earlier. Several hundred journalists and non-journalist staff of different media organisations converged at south Mumbai's Hutatma Chowk - a popular place for demonstrations - to peacefully express solidarity with the staff of the TV channels. A delegation of mediapersons, which included top functionaries of the two channels, met chief minister Ashok Chavan and lodged their protest over the Sena's attack on the media and freedom of press. Maharashtra Governor S C Jamir Saturday strongly condemned the attacks on the media houses and on its editor Nikhil Wagle. In a strongly worded statement, Jamir directed the state government to initiate "exemplary steps to stop such attacks on the media and mediapersons in future." Terming the attacks as shameful and shocking, the governor said this was the third major attack on the Mumbai media in the past 18 months and such incidents did great harm to the image of the state and its people. "What is alarming is the overt and covert political patronage these incidents of vandalism receive from political parties and individual," the governor noted in an oblique reference to the Shiv Sena owning up and justifying the attacks. "While it is necessary to punish the perpetrators of violence, it is equally imperative to punish and expose those who incite and justify such uncivilized actions. The media also needs to observe due restraint and remain objective while presenting news and opinions," Jamir urged. The Shiv Sena activists had barged into the offices, damaged property and editorial staff after their chief Bal Thackeray was criticised on the channels. (Times of India 21/11/09)

"Make attacks on journalists a non-bailable offence" (1)

Mumbai: Following the attacks on IBN offices by the Shiv Sena, a delegation led by Rajdeep Sardesai, Editor-in-Chief of CNN-IBN; Nikhil Wagle, Editor of IBN-Lokmat; and Vijay Darda, Lokmat group Chairman, met Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan on Saturday. Apart from pressing for stringent action against the masterminds, they demanded an ordinance against attacks on journalists and treating such incidents as a non-bailable offence. Mr. Sardesai said: "We want the government to pass an ordinance that whenever a mediaperson is attacked, it would be considered a non-bailable offence. Only then an element of fear will come. If it can be done for doctors, it can be done for journalists too." Mr. Chavan told journalists outside his residence after the meeting: "All the prominent people from the media have given me a representation on Friday's attack. I have condemned the attack. I have already instructed the police and they swung into action. We are trying to ascertain the people behind the attacks. Let me assure the electronic and print media and all the people of Maharashtra that we will not tolerate this sort of activity from any political party. The matter is under investigation." A committee which looked into attacks on the media would be strengthened and made more effective, Mr. Chavan said. He would meet the committee on Monday or Tuesday. "A Cabinet Minister or the Chief Minister will chair meetings on incidents related to the media in future." As for the investigation into Friday's violence, he said the Home Minister himself was looking into the matter. "We will investigate this thoroughly. Nobody will be spared." Meanwhile, the Mumbai police have booked 17 persons on the charge of attempt to murder (Section 307 of the IPC). They were remanded to police custody on Saturday. The police are also on the hunt for Sunil Raut, brother of Sena MP and Saamna Editor Sanjay Raut. "He is the main instigator," Deputy Commissioner Rajkumar Vhatkar told The Hindu. The IBN bosses have demanded that the masterminds be brought to book. "This attack is neither the first, nor the last. We want the administration to take the matter as seriously as the Chief Minister has taken. Arresting the attackers is not enough; we want strict action against the masterminds. The fact that several people have been arrested is a good sign, but it needs to be carried through. I was told this [Saturday] morning that Congress president Sonia Gandhi has also taken a serious note of the incident. The Indian Penal Code is before the Chief Minister and the Home Minister, and it is for them to save the image of Maharashtra. They must do it for the sake of the State and of freedom of expression," Mr. Sardesai said. Some cable operators reportedly blacked out channels airing Friday's incident. Mr. Chavan assured the delegation a probe into this too. Mr. Chavan defended the media's freedom and guaranteed their safety. "In a democracy every person has the right to express his or her views. However, sometimes people feel reporting is faulty; there are two

angles to this. But, that does not mean we can behave in such a manner. Beating people is not our culture and no one has the right to hit the other. If you think the media is wrong, you may approach them and state your opinion. A physical attack amounts to goondagardi [hooliganism]." While the exact cause for provocation is unknown, Mr. Wagle told The Hindu that it could be the series of programmes the channel ran critical of Sena chief Bal Thackeray's remarks about cricketer Sachin Tendulkar. "But what is wrong with it [criticising Mr. Thackeray] if you use parliamentary language and stay within the limits of culture? [Sanjay] Raut has said that we have used abusive language, which we haven't. For the Sena if you say Bal Thackeray is wrong, it amounts to abuse," he said... (The Hindu 22/11/09)

Chandy sees bid to curtail freedom of the press (1)

PATHANAMTHITTA: Leader of the Opposition Oommen Chandy said here on Sunday that any attempt to curtail the freedom of the press would be strongly opposed. Mr. Chandy, accompanied by Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) general secretary M.A. Kuttappan, District Congress Committee president P. Mohanraj and Congress Seva Dal district chairman Vettoor Jyotiprasad, was talking to reporters at Chittar, near Konni. He said the alleged attempt to prevent the media from exposing the flaws and wrongdoings of the government machinery and the Travancore Devaswom Board was tantamount to strangulating the freedom of the press in a democratic set-up. Mr. Chandy said the media played a corrective role by exposing the issues faced by pilgrims at Sabarimala. The Left Democratic Front government has been trying to clip the wings of the media ever since it assumed power, he alleged. (The Hindu 24/11/09)

'I'm not a person who would leak the report' (1)

CHANDIGARH: Upset over the "leakage" of his report on the Babri Masjid demolition, Justice (retd) Manmohan Singh Liberhan on Monday said he was not a "characterless" person who would hand it over to the media. "I will not speak on the report. If the report is with the media, then go and find out from where the media got it and who provided the report," a visibly angry Mr. Liberhan told journalists at his residence in Sector 9 here. When it was pointed out that the Opposition had been alleging that the report was "selectively leaked," and when asked whether it was leaked from "his side," Mr. Liberhan said: "Let the Opposition say anything, but what do you mean by this? Don't challenge my character..." "I am not a person who is accessible to you [media]...I don't want to talk about it," he said, adding: "I am not that characterless a person that I will hand over the report to the media before it being placed in Parliament." A newspaper report claimed that the Liberhan Commission, which probed the December 6, 1992 demolition, indicted former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani and BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi among others for the incident. — PTI (The Hindu 24/11/09)

More rights to state to monitor pvt TV channels: Bairwa (6)

JAIPUR: Speaking at a day long seminar of all information and public relation ministers of states and Union territories, in New Delhi, state minister Ashok Bairwa raised the issue of providing more rights to the states for effective monitoring of private television channels. Speaking in the inaugural session of the meet, Bairwa said telecast time of regional news bulletins in the state should be extended from 15 to 30 minutes. "These bulletins give a lot of local news on art and culture, tourism, history and heritage and hence should be telecast for long," said Bairwa. He also raised the issue that content for the tribal communities should be increased on the regional channels. To spread the reach of the national broadcaster in the state, Bairwa pleaded that the Centre should make provision for installing 5,000 free dish sets across the state. "As Rajasthan is the biggest state according to the demographics, the process to start FM stations at seven divisional headquarters in the state," said Bairwa. The minister said that for the development of cinema halls in the state, entertainment tax has been reduced from 50% to 30% and that movie halls running on single projector system in villages with population of less than one lakh have been relieved of any entertainment tax. (Times of India 6/12/09)

Six journalists killed in as many years in Assam (1)

Guwahati, December 07 2009: Six journalists working with various newspapers in Assam were killed by militants or miscreants since 2003, the state assembly was informed today. Ranbir Roy of 'Sonar Cachar' was killed in 2003 in Silchar, while Prahlad Goala of 'Asomiya Khabar' was murdered in 2006 in Golaghat district, Muslemuddin of 'Asomiya Pratidin' and Jagat Singh Saikia of 'Amar Asom' in 2008 in Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts respectively. This year Harichandra Boro of 'Asomiya Pratidin' and Anil Majumdar of

'Aaji' were killed. Forest Minister, Rockybul Hussain, speaking on behalf of the chief minister who is holding the home portfolio, made the statement in a written reply to Phanibhusan Choudhury (AGP). E-PAO 7/12/09)

Journalists stage dharna on Assembly premises (1)

HYDERABAD: Protesting against police lathicharge on their colleagues at Osmania University campus, angry media persons staged a dharna for about two hours inside the Assembly on Monday. The agitating journalists dispersed only after they received an assurance from Chief Minister K. Rosaiah that an inquiry would be ordered and action taken on the police officials concerned. Some television channel reporters and camera persons were beaten up by the police while they were covering the unrest in the campus. Unrelenting agitators As news reached the Assembly, mediapersons squatted inside the Assembly, near Gate One and started shouting slogans. Soon Home Minister P. Sabitha Reddy arrived and assured them that action would be taken. However, the agitators were unrelenting and wanted the Chief Minister to personally give them the assurance. The journalists broke the police cordon and rushed further and squatted at the portico from where the Chief Minister enters the Assembly. They dispersed after a delegation of senior journalists met Mr. Rosaiah and conveyed to them, his assurance to take action against police. (The Hindu 8/12/09)

Manipur journalists not to cover "orange festival" (1)

IMPHAL: Following the assault of a journalist by some tribal volunteers during the "orange festival" that opened on Friday night, the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU) has decided not to publish any reports and photographs on the State-wide festival. Every year, the festival is organised in Tamenglong district to showcase the delectable oranges produced in huge quantities here. Apart from the stalls displaying the oranges, there are various entertainment programmes including the selection of 'Miss Orange Queen.' Reports say that the organisers of the festival had "misbehaved" with the Imphal-based journalists, who had gone there to cover the carnival. The journalists were forced to stand as their chairs had to be given to some other visitors. One tribal youth had angrily kicked a chair which hit a journalist. When the journalist protested, he was punched. Following this, the scribes decided to leave the function. It was alleged that foul language was used against them. A press release by the AMWJU said that the boycott would continue till the organisers apologised. (The Hindu 13/12/09)

Journalists in Pune protest against beating up of counterparts (1)

Pune: Local Pune journalists today held a protest here today demanding arrest of a builder for allegedly beating up two reporters of a Marathi daily for raising questions over a construction project in a news item. According to a complaint lodged with police, the builder Anil Sewlekar and his accomplices yesterday beat up Yogesh Kute, who is also president of Pune Shramik Patrakar Sangh, and Sandip Jagdale of daily Sakal confining them in his residence following publication of a report alleging irregularities in a construction project. The accused called the reporters at his residence on the pretext of giving a clarification and threatened to kill them if they did not tender written apology, the complaint said. The collector Chandrakant Daliv assured a delegation of journalists to speed up process of nabbing the main accused who is still absconding. (DNA 13/12/09)

Attack on scribes: 1 held, but builder untraceable (1)

PUNE: The police on Sunday arrested a caterer for his involvement in the attack on two city journalists a day earlier. However, they have not been able to trace builder Anil Seolekar, the man allegedly behind the attack. Media organisations in the city have registered a strong protest against the builder and the authorities. The caterer, Jerome Devdas (50), a resident of Pune cantonment, works for Seolekar. Speaking to TOI, deputy commissioner of police (zone-IV) Jalindar Supekar said investigations have revealed that Devdas was involved in the attack. He said six police teams have been formed to search for the other suspects. According to the Faraskhana police, Yogesh Kute, president of the Pune Union of Working Journalists (PUWJ), and Sandeep Jagdale, a reporter both from daily Sakaal' had gone to meet Seolekar on Saturday to seek his comments over a news item which had appeared in the newspaper. When they reached his residence in Mundhwa, they were allegedly locked in a room for over three hours and beaten up. They were released only after allegedly being threatened and told not to write against the builder. Kute registered a complaint with the Faraskhana police station of attempted murder, threatening and wrongful confinement. Later, the complaint was transferred to the Hadapsar police station. Around

300 media representatives, including members of the electronic media, print media, photographers, cameramen and others, staged a dharna on Saturday night at the Farasakhana police station demanding the arrest of the builder. After the police gave an assurance of quick action and the arrest of the suspects, the media representatives dispersed around 2 am on Sunday. On Sunday morning, the protest continued with a special meeting at the PUWJ hall to condemn the attack. Senior journalists expressed serious concern over repeated attacks on the media. After the meeting, some 400 journalists and non-journalistic staff held a rally at the district collector's office. They shouted slogans demanding quick action against the accused. Some politicians, including representatives of youth organisations and MLAs, were also present. "We are taking action in this case. The police commissioner and I are personally looking into this matter," collector Chandrakant Dalvi told media representatives at the rally. (Times of India 14/12/09)

State proposes law to protect mediapersons (1)

Nagpur, December 15, 2009 After doctors, the state proposes to make a law to protect mediapersons from attacks and damages to their editorial offices. Chief Minister Ashok Chavan announced this in the Legislative Assembly and Council on Monday. The journalists, covering the ongoing winter session of the state legislature, boycotted the morning proceedings and protested against the attack on two Pune journalists. Last weekend, a builder beat up the reporters. Last month, Shiv Sena workers vandalised offices of television channel IBN-Lokmat. In the past, several media officers have been attacked across the state, especially in Mumbai. All political parties supported the journalists, who sat on a two-hour dharna on the Vidhan Bhavan premises. Chavan met the protestors and assured them that the state would pass a law to this effect as early possible. The state will discuss the issue on December 21. BJP legislator Girish Bapat moved an adjournment motion on the issue. "If possible, the state will promulgate an ordinance," Chavan told mediapersons. The ordinance to protect doctors was issued four months ago and the bill will be cleared in this session. (Hindustan Times 15/12/09)

Journalists hold convention for free Press (1)

BHUBANESWAR: Laxman Choudhury, a Mohana-based journalist, who was arrested on charges of having links with naxal outfits, was felicitated by media persons from across the State. The High Court recently granted him conditional bail in the case, which had triggered widespread protests from journalists' community. As part of showing solidarity against threat or attack on any working journalist in the State, a convention titled 'Media Unity for Press Freedom' was organised here on Monday. The convention resolved to press for setting up of a State Media Centre in Bhubaneswar. Journalists appealed editors and management of all publications and channels to ensure that their representatives worked without fear. Mechanism should be put in place to make proper identification of working journalists in Maoist-affected areas. Journalists condemned State government for charging journalists with sections like waging war against the State, sedition and criminal conspiracy. Attack on journalist in Puri and manhandling of two journalists at Sambalpur were denounced on the occasion. The convention decided that December 14 would be observed as Free Press Day by journalists across Orissa. Intellectuals and civil rights activists joined the convention as mark of solidarity to cause of free-press. Veteran journalists who spoke on the occasions included Rabi Das, Prasant Patnaik, Sudhir Patnaik and Soumyajit Patnaik. Media persons who were threatened by administration at different points of time also shared their experience. (The Hindu 15/12/09)

68 journalists killed in 2009 (1)

New York :At least 68 journalists were killed in 2009, with the largest death toll in the Philippines, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said Thursday. More than 30 media persons were slaughtered in the Philippine province of Maguindanao during November's electoral campaign, CPJ said. Twenty-nine journalists and two supporting staff were among the 57 people murdered in an ambush mounted by rival political clans. CPJ said it was still investigating the deaths of 20 other journalists in 2009 to confirm whether they were work-related. In 2007, 67 journalists were killed worldwide. "This has been a year of unprecedented devastation for the world's media, but the violence also confirms long-term trends," CPJ executive director Joel Simon said in the year-end report. "Most of the victims were local reporters covering news in their own communities," he said. Nine local journalists were murdered or killed in combat situations in Somalia. Among the dead was Said Tahill Ahmed, director of independent broadcaster HornAfrik, who was gunned down in Mogadishu with others when they were walking to a press conference. Four journalists were killed in Pakistan, including Musa Khanhel, a local TV

reporterOther journalists were killed in Russia, Mexico and Sri Lanka. "As in past years, murder was the leading cause of work-related deaths in 2009," CPJ said. "At least 50 journalists were targeted and slain in retaliation for their work, representing about three-quarters of the deaths in 2009." (India Info 18/12/09)