



IFJ South Asia Media Bulletin

15 April 2021

Welcome to the IFJ's monthly media bulletin for South Asia's Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN).

IN FOCUS: Anti-Modi protesters and police target media in Bangladesh

At least 17 journalists covering major anti-Modi demonstrations on March 25 and 26 were assaulted by Bangladesh police as well as members of the Chhatra League, the youth front of the ruling Awami League. During the demonstrations in Dhaka, Chhatra League leaders and activists assaulted journalists with sticks and took their press passes. According to the Bangladesh Manobodhikari Sambadhik Forum (*BMSF*), three photojournalists from *Prothom Alo*, Hasan Raza, Syed Ashraful Alam and Syed Ashraful Alam and two photojournalists from *The Daily Star*, Amran Hossen and Prabir Das, were injured by members of the Chhatra League. Out of 17 attacks on journalists, four attacks came from police. Injuries that journalists incurred included bruises, broken bones, a dislocated shoulder and a cracked skull. Police used an array of tactics to injure the photojournalists and reporters covering the anti-Modi demonstrations taking place across Bangladesh as Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited as chief guest at the joint celebrations of the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence on March 26. Modi was the target of demonstrator criticism for his alleged role in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, in which at least 1000 people, were killed. At least 13 people were killed in the March protests, with dozens injured.



Activists from a student council clash with police during a demonstration protest against the upcoming visit of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi, in Dhaka on March 25, 2021. Credit: AFP

In this bulletin

- **Unions fight for labor rights amid pandemic**
- **Afghanistan's police arrest journalist killers**
- **Pakistan parliament seeks input on economic exploitation of journalists**
- **Assessing impunity in the Maldives**
- **Elections in Nepal**

The Region

Unions fight for labour rights protection

Amid increased incidents of economic harassment, including job cuts, pay cuts, leave without pay, intentional closure of media houses and health issues during the Covid-19 pandemic, journalist unions in South Asia continue to make a difference in media workers' lives.

any journalist who contracts Covid-19 while the Punjab Government will pay Rs 1 million (USD 6,500) to the family of any journalist who dies due to the deadly disease. In **India**, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and Indian Journalists Union (IJU) have [submitted](#) a proposal to the central government advocating for a relief package with including provisions such as Covid-19 insurance, financial assistance and compensation to the families of deceased journalists. In **Bhutan**, the Journalists Association of Bhutan (JAB), together with the Bhutan government, [carried out](#) an awareness campaign against fake news in social media and [provided](#) masks and other basic health and safety materials to working journalists. In **Sri Lanka**, unions issued a [statement](#) criticizing the BBC's decision to close down the Sinhala Radio broadcast and retrench its workers.

National Issues

Afghanistan: In a key development in the fight against impunity, Afghanistan's police [arrested](#) 11 Taliban members on April 7 for their suspected role in a series of targeted killings, including that of media adviser to the Central Bank and former TOLO News journalist, Yama Siawash. Nine of the suspects [confessed](#) their involvement in the series of targeted murders.

Bhutan: The Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF) has published [a book of 39 stories](#), detailing how individuals, communities and civil society organisations took part in the battle against the pandemic. BMF's executive director, Needup Zangpo, called the book "a tribute to the

Bangladesh: Bangladeshi cartoonist Kabir Kishore, who was subjected to physical abuse during a 10-month stint in police custody, is [facing](#) serious health issues such as a burst eardrum, leg injuries, diabetes and other ailments. Kishore, who was accused of violating the Digital Security Act (DSA), was released on March 4 in the wake of widespread protests over the [death](#) on February 25 of writer Mushtaq Ahmed, a co-accused in the case against Kishore.

India: New [social media rules](#), announced in India on February 25, were widely criticized as further empowering government to control public discourse on social platforms, including WhatsApp and Twitter. The rules [give](#) the Indian government even broader discretion to determine

Maldives: The Maldives Media Council, the Maldives Attorney General's office and other stakeholders [held](#) an online consultation on April 8 to support the drafting of a new media regulatory bill. During the discussion, the media stakeholders including MJA demanded the creation of a self-regulatory body and opposed government interference in the name of regulation.

Pakistan: Amid concerns of journalists and their unions over economic harassment, a sub-committee of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting [asked](#) journalist representative groups and unions, including the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), to submit recommendations. The sub-committee said it will take legal action based on recommendations received.

Nepal: Amid confusion created by the publication of misinformation in the Nepali media, Nepal Fact Check was launched by the Center for Media Research (CMR) and mysansar.com. Nepal Fact Check [identified](#) multiple stories from the mainstream media as being misleading, false or unverified, leading to [apologies](#) from Nepali media about their mistakes.

Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan journalist, Sujeewa Gamage, who was arrested by the police from the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) on March 17 for allegedly making 'false claims' about his own abduction, was [granted](#) bail on March 19. Gamage was arrested after being released from a hospital where he was being treated for burns and injuries allegedly received during his abduction by armed-men on March 10.

Media Rights Violations

Pakistani journalist Ajay Lalwan, a noted voice who raised issues for Hindu minority in Pakistan, died on March 18 after sustaining multiple gunshots in an attack in Sindh province. IFJ recorded 21 incidents of attacks against journalists and media workers in the past month including four incidents of harassment and two cases of misuse of law. Out of 21 incidents, 18 were from Bangladesh and one each from Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. Of the 18 journalists attacked in

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**Violations by Type**

Killing	1
Arrest/Detention	0
Attack	21
Censorship	
Harassment	3
Internet Shutdown	
Law	2
Economic Pressure	

Violations by Country

Afghanistan	0
Bangladesh	18
Bhutan	0
India	2
Maldives	0
Nepal	2
Pakistan	3
Sri Lanka	2

Featured Action

Nepal: Bipul Pokharel was [elected](#) as the president of the Federation of Nepali Journalists on April 11. Similarly, Ramesh Bista, was elected senior vice-president while Bala Adhikari secured the post of women vice-president. Likewise, Uday GM won the post of inclusive vice-president while Roshan Puri was elected as general secretary. This time FNJ has adopted the first-ever direct voting system to elect its central committee leadership.

Maldives: Maldives Journalists Association (MJA) [conducted](#) an assessment of violations against journalists in the Maldives in support of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) under the 'Stronger Media, Stronger Democracy' project, supported by the UK's FCDO. The report documents the history of attacks on journalists, assesses the status of cases and reviewed progress of the government-led commission into key deaths and disappearances.

IFJ Blog

A failure to prosecute past crimes by religious extremists in the Maldives is causing major problems for the future of democracy in the Maldives. Fazla Abdul-Samad [unpacks](#) the situation.

IFJ At Work:

- **IFJ finalizes online MRM training course:** The IFJ has completed the

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

UNESCO through the *Strengthening Monitoring, Reporting and Advocacy for Media Rights Violations in South Asia* project, the course aims to enable activists of media unions and associations to build a basic understanding of journalists' rights and press freedom and provide an introduction to advocacy.

- IFJ to launch South Asia Press Freedom Report on May 3: IFJ and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) will launch the 19th South Asia Press Freedom Report on May 3 - World Press Freedom Day. This year the report features special reportage from the region including the impact of Covid-19 on journalist reporting, rising digital controls and the advent of a new kind of lawfare aimed at silencing critical reporting. Stay tuned for the joint launch with UNESCO.

FROM THE MEDIA

The clampdown on media has reached a new level with restricting reports, shutting down the programs, and job losses in the media industry- from [The New Indian Express](#).

Disappointment with mainstream media's portrayal of farmer protests has given rise to new independent journalism. One group has introduced a grassroots, volunteer-run newspaper to cover the demonstrations - from [DW](#).

As peace talks are underway and President Biden is contemplating whether to finally pull out of America's longest war, doves of seasoned Afghan reporters are being targeted and driven into hiding - From [Rolling Stone](#)

Pakistan Resolution was a precursor to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan and the essential freedoms mentioned in the Resolution have been translated into the Constitution - from [The News](#)

TAKE ACTION!

Apply for the [Domestic Violence Impact Reporting Fund](#)

Read and share **When home becomes your newsroom** – [The IFJ guide](#) to ensure your rights at home #RIGHTSATHOME #SAFETELEWORK

Read and share: IFJ Covid-19 and Women Journalists [Survey](#)

Read, share and submit entries for [One World Media Awards 2021](#).

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine: what journalists need to know” [course](#)

In Solidarity, IFJ Asia-Pacific

Stay updated with IFJ - Subscribe

International Federation of Journalists
Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO)
245 Chalmers Street
Redfern, NSW, 2016
Australia

Contact IFJ Asia-Pacific:
www.ifj.org/regions/asia-pacific

Copyright © 2021 International Federation of Journalists, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list

This email was sent to <<Email - correo electrónico>>
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
International Federation of Journalists · Rue de la Loi 155, City of Brussels, Belgium · City of Brussels 1040 · Belgium