

International award to journalist Nava Thakuria



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Guwahati: The Geneva-based Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) rewards senior journalist Nava Thakuria, a resident of northeast India, for his relentless initiatives to safeguard the rights of media persons in the south Asian country and also defending press freedom in the region with an exemplary commitment.

The Assam-based working journalist has been awarded on 30 November 2021 remotely as it was difficult for him to reach Geneva because of the Covid-19 restrictions.

“It is the first time that the PEC rewards a journalist from India, the second most populous country in the world. India has a strong democracy and a vibrant press. Last year, however, a record number of 15 journalists were killed in India and six this year. Journalists are targeted for documenting abuses, corruption, criminal activities,” stressed the PEC Secretary-General Blaise Lempen.

In 2021, the media fraternity in India was the most affected by the novel coronavirus along with Brazil. The PEC award also wants to pay tribute to some 300 journalists who died throughout India with Covid-19 complications.

“Receiving the PEC award is a great honour and represents a strong incentive to continue my work. I now feel more responsible for my colleagues in the media fraternity. At the same time, I greatly appreciate this award, which draws attention to the situation of journalists in my country,” said Thakuria.

Journalism, be it print, electronic or digital, remains a hazardous job in India. Media personnel are not duly paid here and often they face threats from both the government and non-state actors including the goons. This year, the Covid-19 has impacted severely upon the media industry in India, he added.

Besides his home country, Thakuria has also taken the pain of documenting the media crisis in Myanmar (also known as Burma or Brahmadesh) and reported the detention of over 120 journalists after the military coup in February. Nearly 40 out of them are still behind bars there.

A graduate from Assam Engineering College (under Gauhati University), but preferred to be a professional journalist, Thakuria contributes to various newspapers of India along with several media outlets based in the different parts of the world.

Starting his career as a reporter in Natun Dainik, an Assamese language daily in 1990, Thakuria shifted to freelance journalism by 1999. His focus area of reporting remains the socio-political, cultural and environmental developments taking place in eastern India along with Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The changing face of mainstream journalism after the advent of alternate media worldwide is also a primary focus area for him. He has visited most of the prime localities in India and also Thimphu, Dhaka, Yangon, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Copenhagen, Chicago, etc for different global events and professional assignments.

Created in the Swiss city of Geneva in 2004 by a group of journalists, PEC, the global media safety and rights body with consultative status at the United Nations, is devoted to strengthening the legal protection and safety of journalists around the world. Since 2009, it has been awarding its annual prize to an individual or an organization, who works for the protection of journalists and the press freedom on the ground.

The award had earlier gone to Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui in 2020. On the previous year, the PEC awarded the Afghanistan Journalists Center director Ahmad Quraishi, whereas in 2018 the award went to the family of Daphne Caruana Galizia (who was murdered in Malta in October 2017).

Assam Times Staff. editor@assamtimes.org

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