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Media in Chains in Manipur



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The media which is a mirror of society has been broken into shards by the the guns of militants in Manipur. The newspapers were missing from their usual stands in Manipur following threats and counter threats by rival factions of rebel organisation PREPAK over publication of a statement. According to the All Manipur Working Journalists Union the media was torn over a decision to publish a statement which a faction of the PREPAK wanted to publish while another opposed and threatened to react violently if published.

The journalists fearing for their lives sought safety in the Imphal Press clubs instead of their homes for fear of persecution. But this is not unusual in manipur as earlier also Imphal based publications went off the stands as a protest against threats from these same organisation. As a result the newspaper offices had halted their proceedings on September 1 for five days. Finally the strike was adjourned after a meeting took place between the newspaper owners and journalists where they decided not to publish any critical statements related to these warring factions. The state government too has been trying to prohibit the press from publishing news of militant groups.

Freedom of the press has been totally annihilated in Manipur. The wings of the media which echoes the good the bad and the ugly of society has been clipped in Manipur. The press should be left alone in the feuds of any kind of organisation as it has the important job of informing the public of every activity and it is ultimately the public who has to decide on a plan of action. Though the media has a role to reform as well as inform it has to do so according to the parameters of society sometimes restraining and sometimes highlighting social issues but never titillating. But its our duty to keep faith in it and not curb it.

Photo: All Manipur Working Journalist Union (AMWJU) organizing an emergency general body meeting following the threat from a valley base UGs to journalist regarding a factional issue publication at Manipur Press club, Imphal on 11-10-07. Pix by UB Photos.



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