

Uncertain fate of two Assamese Journalists in Myanmar



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editor 7 December 2011 13695 views

To,

Dr Manmohan Singh, Honourable Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

Subject: Uncertain fate of two Assamese Journalists in Myanmar

Respected Sir,

Namaskar. Hope this letter finds you in fine spirits and health. We, on behalf of Journalists' Forum Assam (JFA), would like to inform you that two Assamese journalists remain untraced since their detention in Myanmar (also known as Brahmadesh) on December 3 last. Both the journalists had reportedly gone inside the country for interviewing Paresh Baruah, the self-styled military chief of banned United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

The news broke on December 4, 2011, when the news agency Press Trust of India (PTI) reported about their detention somewhere in Myanmar-China border areas. The PTI quoted RK Singh, Union Home Secretary for the information. While Singh denied the detention of Paresh Baruah who is at large after fleeing from Bangladesh, he informed that 'ULFA leader Jivan Moran and an Indian journalist were detained in Myanmar' (<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2686576.ece>). Later it was revealed that two journalists (namely Rajib Bhattacharya who works for a newly launched English daily 'Seven Sister's Post' from Guwahati and a photo-journalist Pradip Gogoi) were detained inside Myanmar.

The Chief Editor of the newspaper, Subir Bhaumik, who used to work for BBC as East India Correspondent till last year, said in a television interview that his colleague (Rajib Bhattacharya) went to Myanmar in the middle of October last. "It was his project and he was determined to take the assignment," Subir Bhaumik said adding that he had no contacts with Rajib Bhattacharya since then.

Rajib's wife Rashmi Sharma, also a journalist, said in a television bite that she received an SMS weeks ago, where the journalist only said that he was fine and waiting for the interview.

Hiranya Bhattacharya, Rajib's father and a former DGP of Assam, said in a television bite that he has no information about Rajib going inside Myanmar. "I only knew that Rajib went to Imphal (capital of Manipur) and later he was supposed to move to Aizawl (capital of Mizoram)," Hiranya Bhattacharya said.

The duo (Rajib Bhattacharya and Pradip Gogoi) were reportedly detained in the north-eastern part of Myanmar bordering China and later the Myanmarese authority released both of them after confiscating their laptop, camera and cell phones (http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_uncertainty-over_fate-indian-journalists-detained-in-myanmar_1621813). Both the journalists were supposed to arrive in Tamu-Moreh (Myanmar-India border point) by the evening of December 4. Rajib's wife in Guwahati was contacted by some officials in the Union Home Ministry and assured that Rajib was released by the Myanmarese authority and he will soon enter Indian side (by December 4 itself). But till this moment, both the journalists have not returned to Assam. No information is available with the family about their whereabouts. The Guwahati based journalists contacted the India Embassy in Yangon where the office of the Ambassador denied having any information (about the detention of Indian journalists and subsequent release inside Myanmar).

We have not seen any statement about the incident from the Myanmar government. Unfortunately the Assam government led by Sri Tarun Gogoi and even the Union Home Ministry have not issued any statement about the incident till date.

We are really worried about the confusing reports regarding the fate of the two journalists, who have neither come back, nor have been traced by any agency.

So we would like to make a formal request to you for taking personal interest in this matter, so that journalists Rajib Bhattacharya and Pradip Gogoi are traced and their return to India is ensured at the earliest. The Myanmar government may also be approached by the PMO for relevant information about the two journalists.

We would be grateful for your kind initiative.

With regards,

Rupam Baruah, President
Journalists' Forum Assam,

editor

Please send your comments to editor@assamtimes.org

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