

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM BANGLADESH (HRFB)

[DHAKA, 25 April 2016] Human Rights Forum, Bangladesh (HRFB), a network of 19 human rights and development organisations in Bangladesh, is deeply concerned about the arrest and detention of Mr. Kanak Mani Dixit, an eminent Journalist, pro-democracy and human rights activist.

Mr. Dixit was arrested on 22 April 2016, Friday in Patan Dhoka, Kathmandu by the Commission of Investigation on Abuse of Authority (CIAA) in Nepal. Reportedly, he has been detained for the alleged charges of illegally amassing property by abusing authority. Mr. Dixit was mentioned in a list of individuals 'under investigation for amassing disproportionate wealth' put out by the CIAA in November 2015. In early April 2016, he was asked to present himself at the CIAA to which Mr. Dixit had replied on 20 April 2016 (Wednesday) that the CIAA didn't have the jurisdiction to issue such an order, and it went against the spirit of a Supreme Court's decision in November 2015.

Mr. Dixit had been critical in his regular columns about the appointment of Mr. Lok Man Singh Karki to head the CIAA (Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority) three years ago, for which the high-level Rayamajhi Commission had accused Mr. Karki of being involved in crackdowns on pro-democracy protesters in the last days of King Gyanendra rule 10 years ago.

HRFB would like to recall the crucial role played by Mr. Kanak Dixit in his capacity as a Journalist with a conscience in upholding democracy and the rule of law in South Asia. He has always stood up for promoting social justice not only in his own country but ensured his presence as a South Asian to influence sustenance of democratic values in the region. He established the South Asia Trust in 2005 that has been acclaimed for publishing the well-respected South Asian magazine titled 'Himal Southasian'; organising biennial South Asian Documentary Film Festival 'Film Southasia', and also running the research organisation 'Institute for Southasian Research and Exchange (HRI)'.

We are particularly concerned about the manner of his arrest and the treatments afterwards. He was detained on 22 April 2016 (Friday) immediate before the closing of Courts to prevent being freed on bail. Following the arrest and the

medical finding that Mr. Dixit had a high level of blood pressure, the CIAA chose to detain him neither in the hospital where he could receive care, nor in its own offices, rather in an uncomfortable police lock up with 30 to 40 other detainees including petty criminals.

The overnight detention in such conditions led to dangerously elevated blood pressure levels forcing the admission of him in the Intensive Care Unit on 23 April 2016 (Saturday). This unnecessary form of detention raises question on the real purpose of the process of investigation.

HRFB urges the Government of Nepal to take immediate action for the release of Mr. Kanak Dixit and to immediately make public the condition of his detention. We want to remind the Government of Nepal that they have responsibilities under national law as well as international law to give full access to lawyers, family members and human rights groups to meet Mr. Dixit in order that his physical and psychological integrity is safeguarded.

We also urge the civil society in South Asia and elsewhere to raise their voice against this arbitrary action and the human rights community in Nepal in particular to monitor the situation of Mr. Dixit continuously and to make all appropriate interventions to secure his immediate release and his safety while in custody.

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