

## **The International Herald Tribune**

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### **The press also needs to police itself; Dangers of journalism**

When a journalist attempts to follow the trail of power, political and business interests are prone to make life very uncomfortable, often at the cost of life itself. It is still not clear who orchestrated the murder on July 9 of Paul Klebnikov, editor of Forbes magazine's Russian edition, but it is likely that powerful business interests had a hand in his death.

Russia ranks alongside Colombia and the Philippines among the most dangerous countries for journalists investigating corruption.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 36 journalists were killed because of their work in 2003. Among the 17 killed outside war zones, seven are believed to have been murdered because of their reporting on corruption.

In Bangladesh, Manik Chandra Saha, who frequently reported on crime and political corruption for the New Age newspaper and the BBC Bengali service, was killed in a bomb attack on Jan. 15.

Carlos Alberto Cardoso, an investigative journalist in Mozambique, was assassinated in November 2000 while investigating the largest banking fraud in the country's history. Georgy Gongadze, a Ukrainian journalist who wrote about the corruption of the Ukrainian government on his Internet news service, was decapitated in autumn 2000.

One of the most important aspects of journalism training must be safety at work, which means, where resources permit, working in teams and notifying colleagues of each reporter's movements when investigating a case of corruption. The Philippines Center for Investigative Journalism played a major role in exposing the corruption of President Joseph Estrada, and the teamwork led to his impeachment and fall from power.

But the media's success in fighting corruption depends also on factors outside the media, including press freedom laws; fair, strong and independent judges; courageous public prosecutors; professional and honest police and public officials, and an environment that enables the media to serve as an effective public watchdog.

Many media owners also have other interests, which often involve the government. In many countries -- not least in Italy -- owners of media are so close to the ruling political party that it is difficult to know whether it is the government or the owner who takes the decisions. It is vital that governments respect and enforce the law equitably, and provide public information as transparently as possible. A clampdown on conflicts of interest is essential for the media to function impartially.

The media's role as a watchdog is key to exposing corrupt politicians and public officials, whether by showing that their lifestyles don't match their declared incomes or by scrutinizing the flow of public monies.

In countries where corruption is high, media owners should be engaged in a

discussion of issues such as journalism pay scales, the independence of editors and the need for adequate newsroom budgets to support investigative reporting.

The media must also clean its own house. Taking cash for editorial content and other unethical media practices are unfortunately prevalent around the world, particularly in southern and eastern Europe and in Latin America, according to a survey in 54 countries by the International Public Relations Association. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in eastern Europe believe that for journalists to accept money for editorial content is common. In southern Europe, Africa and the Middle East, two in five respondents believe that editorial content is generally influenced by bribes. In Latin America, 2 out of 5 respondents said bribes are often accepted by editors and journalists for not running a story.

On Monday, the IPRA and other international public relations bodies joined forces with the International Federation of Journalists, Transparency International and the International Press Institute to launch a Charter of Media Transparency, setting out clear principles to stamp out bribery in public relations and the media.

According to Aidan White, general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, "courageous reporters risk life and limb every day to defend press freedom and human rights. We cannot stand by while bribery mocks those sacrifices."

The media is a vital watchdog to hold those in power to account, not least because reporting on corruption requires journalists to follow the trail of power. The new Charter for Media Transparency, which calls for written policies on gift-taking and on the clear separation of editorial and advertising content, should be supported by journalists, publishers and media owners in order to strengthen the credibility and impartiality of the media.

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## **Agence France Presse**

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### **India's whistleblower, killed for his honesty, up for international award**

**BYLINE:** PENNY MACRAE

Satyendra Kumar Dubey was a whistleblower who was killed for raising his voice and whose heroism has made him a rallying figure for Indians fighting to end the country's rampant corruption.

Dubey, a graduate of an elite engineering college, reported to his bosses shoddy construction work and corruption on India's most ambitious highway project linking all four corners of the nation -- and was shot to death.

Now he has been nominated for the Whistleblower of the Year Award to be given out Monday at London's City Hall by the respected British human rights publication Index on Censorship.

"It takes a very special kind of person to have the courage Dubey had," said Shekhar Gupta, editor of The Indian Express newspaper that brought the engineer's case to the nation's attention.

Not only did Dubey, who was acting as a highway project manager, blow the whistle when others would have turned a blind eye, he did it in the eastern state of Bihar.

The impoverished state is known as India's wild west, a place that is a byword for lawlessness where the only business that booms is kidnap and murder.

When his protest went unheeded, Dubey wrote to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to complain.

Dubey, who was from a ramshackle Bihar town and was paying for his younger siblings' education, said contractors were supplying poor quality work and looting funds from the multi-billion-dollar 5,850-kilometer (3,650-mile) Golden Quadrilateral highway that is a pet government project.

Dubey also asked in his letter for his name to be kept secret but the contents and his identity were leaked.

Last November, nearly a year after Dubey complained to Vajpayee's office, he was shot dead by people who police believe were hoodlums hired by contractors to silence him and to warn others against such honesty.

The government first tried to play down the story. But the Express, which has a crusading reputation, took up his cause and began an internet petition that gathered 45,000 names.

The government finally paid attention. Vajpayee said everything would be done to find the killers of the "upright and dedicated" government officer and declared those responsible for his death "will not be spared."

India's Central Board of Investigation (CBI) launched a probe but the only developments have been the mysterious disappearance of a key witness to Dubey's killing and the suspicious suicides in custody of two suspects.

The CBI said the poisoning deaths of the two suspects pointed to the likelihood of a "mafia hand" in Dubey's shooting.

The Dubey scandal, one of many during the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's five-year stint in power, has reminded the public of rampant graft in the public sector and cast a shadow over its "India Shining" campaign as it cranks up for national elections next month.

International anti-graft groups routinely rank India as one of the most corrupt nations where bribery still greases political and bureaucratic wheels despite over a dozen years of economic liberalisation.

"Some of India is certainly shining and some eyes are surely twinkling at the opportunity to make extraordinary quantities of hay -- the India where bribery has become a way of life, honesty has disappeared from public life and people like **Satyendra Dubey** have to get killed for exposing corruption," said Barun Roy, columnist for the financial daily Business Standard.

Dubey's killing has brought demands for a whistleblower's protection law to help government employees highlight wrongdoing.

Jeevan Reddy, former head of India's law reform commission, said legislation might expose corruption but the flaw is in the weakness of the courts where prosecution witnesses often change their stories when threatened. Without testimony, courts cannot convict.

Dubey is the only posthumous name among the four nominated for the Index on Censorship Whistleblower Award.

Others include Britain's Katharine Gun, cleared last month of charges under the country's Official Secrets Act for leaking a memo suggesting Washington wanted Britain to spy on UN Security Council members as it tried to win support for the war on Iraq.

However, for the Express's Gupta, it doesn't matter whether Dubey wins the award presented by the Index, a publication founded in 1972 to protect free speech worldwide.

"The fact that notice has been taken of his sacrifice has made a difference. We have a good role model. He will be remembered for a long time," Gupta said.

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