

MANIK SAHA



Occupation: Manik Chandra Saha was a respected journalist, based in Khulna, working as the bureau chief of the English Daily *New Age*, a correspondent of the Bangla Daily *Dainik Sangbad* and as a stringer with the BBC Bengali Service.

Attack: Manik was killed on 15 January 2004, on his way home from the Khulna Press Club. Unknown assailants are alleged to have stopped his rickshaw and attacked him with a homemade bomb.

His death triggered a wave of protests in Bangladesh during which journalist associations, academic bodies and political parties held rallies to protest his killing and demanded the arrest of those responsible. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia also condemned the killing.

Fellow journalists believe that Manik was killed in reaction to his reports on the activities of armed Maoist groups and criminal gangs. Those angered by these reports are alleged to have instigated the attack that led to Manik's death.

Prior to his death, Manik had told his colleagues that his life was in danger and that he had been receiving death threats.

On 22 January 2004, the leader of an outlawed group called Purba Bangla Communist Party (Janajuddha), reportedly declared in a letter to the President of the Satkhira Press Club, that he had been responsible for the attack on Manik Saha. The letter went on to threaten another nine journalists with death unless they ceased reporting on Manik's death.

Legal Redress: Police announced that they have been investigating this incident and on 19 January 2004, a charge sheet was submitted naming 12 people for the killing of Manik Saha. On 19 March 2004 a further charge sheet under the Explosives Act was submitted which named 13 people as being responsible for the creation and detonation of the bomb that killed Manik.

On 5 July 2004, a metropolitan magistrate's court accepted the charge sheet in the killing of Manik. This charge sheet accusing 12 people of his killing was submitted to the Metropolitan magistrate on 20 June 2004 by the Officer-in-charge of Khulna Police Station.

In July 2004, a local newspaper reported that the case of Manik Saha's killing would be handled by a Speedy Trial Tribunal and a date would be set after a gazette notification of those who were absconding.

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Bangladesh to:

- Ensure that all those found to be responsible for the killing of Manik Saha are brought to justice promptly and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards;

BANGLADESH: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROJECT

- Ensure that those subjected to attacks, their families, and their witnesses, receive full protection in their efforts to seek justice through the criminal justice system;
- Investigate promptly, fully and by a competent authority every report of death threats against human rights defenders and bring those making these threats to justice;
- Ensure that no one within the criminal justice system acts in connivance with the alleged perpetrators through bribery or negligence;
- Ensure that the police disclose evidence against perpetrators of abuses to the court;
- Ensure that all allegations of human rights abuses including those allegedly perpetrated by members of the ruling party or its allies are investigated promptly by an independent and competent authority and those found responsible are brought to justice regardless of their position in these parties or their links to the government;
- Investigate promptly, fully and by a competent authority every incident of assault on human rights defenders and bring to justice those persons carrying out these attacks, and those instigating them;
- Ensure that no human rights defender is subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Investigate fully, promptly and through a competent authority reports of arbitrary arrest and torture of human rights defenders and bring their perpetrators to justice.