

PEN Myanmar urges the government to defend Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression(4/2016)

1. During the democratic transition, it is important to protect the people's right to access to information. Press freedom, its liability and accountability to people is deemed important. When it comes to references that the press uses, as long as the source information is correct; and the press quoted it accurately without bias, it is accordance with the media ethics.

2. Press freedom means revelation of information as much as possible and the Government guarantees to keep restrictions to information disclosure to minimum. The press freedom is exercised to support the people's right to know.

3. The 7 Day Daily newspaper published a hard news story on April 24 quoting directly from the source so that the liability of the quoted staff in the article shall fall upon the original source itself. The media should take responsible for correct implication. Moreover, the publication of that information was on solid theoretical ground of people's right to know.

4. However, the chief editor and senior reporter of the 7 Day Daily newspaper were filed a lawsuit under Section 131 of the penal code of Myanmar.

A. Firstly, PEN Myanmar welcomes an attempt made by the News Media Council released a statement and encouraged the duoto settle the case through negotiation. Anyhow the newspaper later announced that they apologized for the misunderstanding caused by the news story and would be very careful in citing issues concerning with the Military in the future.

B. That undermines media ethics; having pressured the mediato apologize for the news they have quoted accurately. The definition of protecting press freedom does not only mean to protect media personnel from the lawsuits. It also includes guaranteeing the independence of journalists and editors in publishing and editing the news. Only then it fulfills the right to information of people.

C. Additionally, it is needed to verify whether that decision actually reflects the opinion of journalists and editors of that publication or not. If it is the result of filing a lawsuit under penal code which stipulates harsh punishment, then it has revealed the ugly truth of lack of trust judiciary.

5. PEN Myanmar denounces every attempt made or, planned to silent the voice of media.

6. Therefore, PEN Myanmar calls all public bodies including the Government to protect and defend freedom of expression and freedom of press.

PEN Myanmar