

Reporter allegedly assaulted by airmen

By Kurulu Kariyakarawana (Daily Mirror 29th June 2007)

K P Mohan, a journalist attached to the Tamil daily Thinakkural was allegedly assaulted and seriously injured by a group of armed Air Force personnel at Fort yesterday.

K P Mohan had allegedly been assaulted by several airmen on duty at Lotus Road at around 2.30 pm while on his way to the Presidential Secretariat to cover a meeting between President Rajapaksa and the Maha Sangha.

This follows on an incident on Wednesday when Mr.Mohan was allegedly harassed by Air Force personnel at Galle Face. Mr.Mohan, when walking to the Presidential Secretariat, had been stopped at an Air Force checkpoint near Sambuddahloka Viharaya by an airman who had shouted at him for crossing the road. The road had reportedly been closed to regular traffic as a VIP motorcade was scheduled to pass that way.

The airman had asked for Mohan's identity card and, on seeing it and realising that he was the person who had been stopped near Galle Face the day before, had shouted obscenities at him.

Recalling the various media reports on the alleged harassment of the journalist by the Air Force and noting that the journalist himself had orally reported the incident to the Air Force Media Spokesman Ajantha Silva, the airman had called several others and allegedly assaulted him on the spot.

They had then dragged him to the Fort police station and lodged a complaint saying the journalist had attempted to jump at the VIP motorcade and therefore been taken into custody. K P Mohan had subsequently lodged a counter complaint with the police giving his version of the incident.

He had later been admitted to the Accident Services Unit of the National Hospital by his family.K P Mohan was allegedly harassed at an Air Force checkpoint on Wednesday when, on being asked to show his National Identity Card, he had produced the Media Accreditation Card issued by the Government Information Department.

The air force personnel had rudely rejected the card saying it was a worthless document.

Meanwhile, five media rights organisations -- the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association, Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, Sri Lanka Tamil Journalists' Association, Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions and the Free Media Movement -- have vehemently condemned the assault.