In Bangladesh the practice of attacking the media dates back to the early independence period when the Father of the Nation banned all newspapers except four state regulated publications. But violent assaults on journalists ironically, started with the emergence of democracy in Bangladesh. The first heinous attack on free media that shook the people was a brutal attack on reporter Tipu Sultan in 2001. This investigative reporter was digging out some misdeeds of the then MP of Feni, Joynal Hajari. The MP, nicknamed Godfather of Feni, unleashed his cadres who brutally flogged Sultan with sticks, bats and rods. Both his legs and hands were broken. Police refused to file a case against the "godfather" during the caretaker government. But the current Awami League government withdrew the case terming it as a "case of political harassment". So the godfather of Feni is roaming around freely and Tipu Sultan, now working for Prothom Alo, is still bearing the bitter memory of those days.

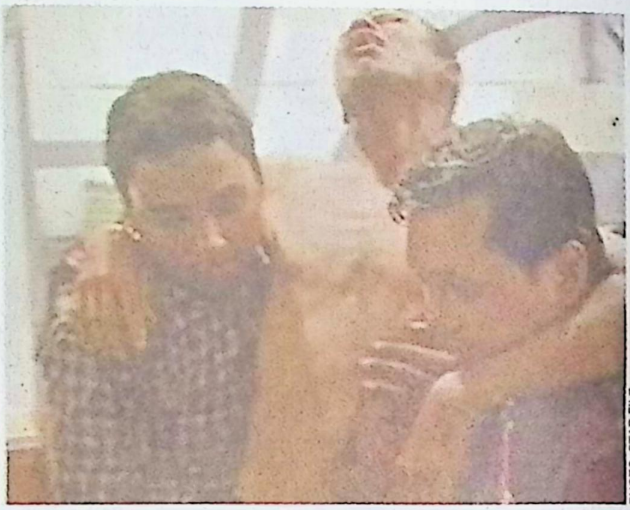


PHOTO: STAR FILE

One of the two journalists beaten up by MP Golam Maula Rony.



Capturing the truth.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Lakshmipur, a small town not far from Feni, trembles in fear of its Mayor Taher. Every citizen of Feni knows the murderous character of Taher and his son Biplob. In fact, Abu Taher has threatened journalists publicly, "If they write a single line against me, I will cut their limbs and will drown them in the Meghna River" (The Daily Prothom Alo, 3rd May, 2004). And his "able" son Biplob has killed a lawyer named Nurul Islam on September 18, 2001 and cut him into pieces before drowning his remains in the Meghna River. The killer is at large after getting Presidential clemency on this case in 2011.

In 2000 the Awami government's state minister for Relief declared in a public gathering, "If the journalists write against you, break their hands and legs. No news will be published against you." Just 36 hours after this assurance, a violent mob of AL cadres vandalised Satkhira Press Club and brutally flogged a journalist named Anisur Rahman. (The daily *Prothom Alo*, May 3, 2004.)

BNP has also achieved expertise in persecuting journalists. According to CPJ, seven journalists have been killed within five years of BNP government's tenure. Murder of prominent journalists like Goutam Das, Manik Saha, Sheikh Belaluddin have been some of the dark chapters in the last BNP government's term in office. Journalists were harassed while doing their duty. In 2002, an MP of Naogaon harassed and beat a journalist because