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PRESS RELEASE

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The Press Club of India (PCI) stands in solidarity with the Guwahati Press Club's protest being held today against the arrest of senior digital media journalist Dilawar Hussain Mozumder by Assam Police post midnight on March 26.

Mozumder, who is also assistant general secretary of the Guwahati Press Club, was detained at Guwahati's Pan Bazar police station since March 25 afternoon without citing to his family or the media outfit, The CrossCurrent, with which he is associated as the chief reporter, on what charges he was summoned to the police station and detained therewith.

On March 25 afternoon, Mozumdar was summoned by Assam Police while covering a protest held by a sister organisation of the regional party, Assam Jatiya Parishad, in front of the headquarters of the state government-run bank, Assam Co-Operative Apex Bank at Pan Bazar. The protest was held against alleged multi-score scam in the recruitment of the bank. While the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is the bank's director, its chairman is Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Biswajit Phukan.

When the Bank's managing director Dambaru Saikia arrived at the scene, Mozumder approached him for a news byte, and asked him if he could stop there to reply to his questions. Saikia could be heard on camera asking him to come to his office upstairs instead, which Mozumder did.

However, on coming out of the bank, he received a call on his phone from the Pan Bazar police station, asking him to report. On arrival, he was detained. In a Facebook post soon after reaching the police station, Mozumder had said that he was being detained for asking questions to the bank MD about the alleged scam. The CrossCurrent ran reports stating that he was detained on the complaint of the MD that he had trespassed into the bank, though it was at the asking of the top official did he go inside it to complete the work assignment. Mozumder has been reporting on the allegations against the bank for some time.

On March 25, as the news about detaining Mozumder spread, several senior journalists and reporters of the city reached the police station. They were not allowed to meet Mozumder. The assembled journalists waited till past 1 a.m. trying to contact senior officials of the police station to know why was he being detained. His lawyer too was not allowed to enter the premises.



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Since Mozumder was on fast, his wife had reached the police station with Iftaar in the early evening which too was refused. Mozumder, a diabetic, was also not allowed medicines.

Past 11 p.m., on the continued insistence of fellow journalists, his wife was allowed to meet him for some time.

Post midnight, an Assam Police official told those waiting outside the police station that he had been arrested under the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (Prevention And Atrocities) Act for hurting the sentiments of a person from the Bodo community. The police, however, failed to cite the complainant's name or where exactly did the incident take place.

PCI condemns the Assam Police's highhandedness on the matter, particularly refusal to inform his family and his colleagues on what grounds he was detained in the first place. Preventing a journalist from carrying out his official duty is a grave infringement of the freedom of press that is guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (A) of the Constitution.

PCI urges the Assam Government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is also the state home minister, to look into the matter with all sincerity, and ensure that the state police respect the true spirit of the SC/ST Act, while also taking into consideration that there must not be any false charges lodged against a reporter who belongs to a backward, minority community, and was covering a sensitive corruption-related protest as part of his routine job.

Gautam Lahiri
(President)

Neeraj Thakur
(Secretary General)