

Repeal ordinance

FROM PAGE 12 people, brutally tortured during the drive, the press release added.

The letter also urged the government to ensure effective and independent judicial system in the country so that human rights violation could be checked.

The ordinance would degrade the country's democratic norms, values and practices and ultimately be detrimental to the country's image, the letter added.

Referring the constitutional safety nets for protecting the citizens' human rights, the letter said the constitution has lost its shape to protect the people from extrajudicial injustice, harassment and violation of human and civil rights.

President of the BHRW Dr. M. Mohsin, Secretary General Ratan Kumar Barua and four directors Sitangshu Guha, Paul Bala, Mohammad Ali Siddiqui and Fahim Reza Nur jointly signed the letter.

If the ordinance is not repealed by the government immediately, it will allow the joint drive forces a free hand in any future operation without caring for human rights, the letter mentioned.

As reported, almost all people arrested during the joint operation were subjected to inhuman physical torture resulting in about 50 deaths

and injury of about 1500 people. During the operation 11,000 people were arrested so far without warrants of which only 2400 were listed criminals, the letter added.

Copies of the letter were also sent to different international organisations including the US Department of State, the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, US Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Members of the US Congressional Caucus for Bangladesh, European Parliament; Amnesty International; UN Commission On Human Rights; National Development Institute (NDI), World Organization Against Tortures; UNESCO Human Rights Division; World Human Rights Watch and South Asian Human Rights Watch.

Meanwhile, in a statement yesterday Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonny Parishad (BMSP) also condemned the ordinance and urged the government to immediately repeal it.

Bangladesh Gonotantrik Ainjibi Samity, the 11-party, Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal and Bangladesh Chhatra League also made the same demands.

Lawyers' move

FROM PAGE 1 everyone is equal in the eye of law and every citizen has the right to seek legal shelter. Article 46 deals with indemnity saying that in certain situations, the government can indemnify a person or persons but that has to be approved by the parliament.

The lawyers are seeing if the indemnity ordinance was made as per the provisions of Article 46 and whether the spirit of this article was properly interpreted or not in making the ordinance.

They have deduced that the ordinance violated Article 26. "In the light of this, we are hoping to file a writ petition very soon," the senior lawyer added.

False case

FROM PAGE 1 Elephant Road. On refusal, the gang beat him.

He caught Nasir, Manik and Mizan with the help of people nearby and handed them over to Dhanmondi thana, he had complained in the case.

On the same day, Hasib filed an extortion case with Dhanmondi thana against the six persons.

On September 15 last year, IO of the case Sub-inspector Saidur Rahman submitted a charge sheet to the CMM's court, Dhaka against Nasir, Manik and Mizan, dropping the names of Mintu, Kalam and Jamal. Nine people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

After cross-examination of five prosecution witnesses and two defence witnesses, the court found that Hasib was an "extortionist".

The court found that he had caught three of the six persons when they went to meet him at his shop and handed them over to Dhanmondi police, falsely accusing them of extortion.

Hasib and the accused hail from Chandpur. The court found that Hasib filed the "false case" against the accused following to a feud in their area.

Finding the investigation "flawed" and the charges "false, fabricated and concocted", the court on November 27 last year acquitted the accused and asked Hasib to reply on January 11 why legal action would not be taken against him.

The complainant appeared before the court yesterday and submitted a written reply. As the reply was not satisfactory, the court sentenced him and ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail.

CEC for troops

FROM PAGE 1 As the government is yet to respond to the EC through official channel, the commission will send a reminder seeking deployment of troops, Syed told journalists at the EC secretariat.

Earlier, the CEC wrote to the government seeking deployment of the army to maintain law and order before and during the polls staggering for more than two months since January 25.

The government should let the commission know, whatever it may be, through official channel, he said.

Queried about a reported move by the government to remove him from office on the age ground, the CEC trashed any such report.

The commission will decide on its course of action later, if the government eventually refuses to deploy troops, Syed said in reply to another question.

Not only the EC, Syed said, but voters, candidates, observers, media men and even the common people want that the army be deployed for a fair election.

Earlier at a meeting with election observers, the CEC said that there was an option to consider troops deployment during the polls although the army has already been pulled back from the upazila headquarters.

"It is urgent to deploy the armed forces for a free and fair election," he was quoted as saying.

JS session

FROM PAGE 1 The Operation Clean Heart began on October 17.

The just-effected fuel-price hike is also expected to dominate the proceedings.

A Business Advisory Council (BAC) meeting will decide on its agenda and duration before the session begins.

The first session of a year is usually long, featuring lengthy debate on the presidential speech besides legislative and other businesses.

As required by the constitution, the indemnity ordinance should be placed before the Sangsad on the first day of the coming session.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told reporters at his office yesterday that a bill would be tabled for enactment of the ordinance into a law once it is placed for ratification.

"But, we are yet to decide whether to pass the bill by simple majority or to incorporate it in the constitution in the form of an amendment," he said to a question.

Promulgated Thursday, the ordinance indemnified all the acts of the 87-day army-led joint operation.

The parliament can approve or repeal a law by simple majority, but it needs the support of two-thirds of its members for any change to the constitution.

The last session of the parliament was prorogued on November 27.

Chronology of deaths during joint drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

October 17... Shafiqul Islam, 16, son of Dudu Mia, dies as the army opens fire on an agitating crowd in Bogra.

Oct. Yakub Ali, 40, organising secretary of the Uttara thana unit of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), dies in the capital after being picked up by the army. His body is handed to relatives the next day.

Jahangir Hossain, 38, a BNP activist, is picked up by the army from his Pallabi residence in the city and dies in custody. Relatives receive Jahangir's body the following day.

October 19... Abul Khayer Molla, 50, a BNP activist and freedom fighter, dies at the Gopalganj Sadar Hospital after army arrest and interrogation.

October 21... Afzal Hossain, 25,

a businessman, dies at the Savar Combined Military Hospital after being picked up from a tea stall and interrogated by an army team.

October 22... Amirul Islam Rocket, 35, general secretary of the Bhola district unit of the Awami League, dies at the Bhola Sadar Hospital, a day after arrest.

Saifuzzaman dies in Gaibandha following his arrest by the joint forces the day before.

October 23... Nazmul Islam Milan, 40, a Jubo League activist and ticket seller of a cinema, dies at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital hours after his arrest by the army.

October 25... Abdul Aziz Sardar, 47, general secretary of the Pangsha thana BNP, dies two days after his arrest by the troops on October 23.

October 26... Khorshed, 35, a

day-labourer of Kalapoka Ramgati, dies at the Choumuhuni station, allegedly beaten by the army while asleep.

October 27... Masum Biswas, 38, an activist of the Khulna Jubo League and cousin of AL lawmaker Sheikh Helal, dies at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), three days after his arrest in Khulna on October 23.

October 28... Kala Chand Tripura, a constable of the Pekua Police Station in Cox's Bazar, dies at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), four days after being beaten by an army team.

Abul Hossain Litu, 27, dies in his poultry farm at Savar following alleged torture by the army. The army claims Litu fell from the rooftop of the farmhouse and died as he tried to escape.

October 29... Jamir Uddin, a

suspected criminal, dies at the Gopalganj Thana Health Complex in Sylhet hours after his arrest by the army.

Abu Syed Delu, 22, died at the Chest Disease Hospital in the capital a week after his arrest.

October 30... Jennifer Syed King, 25, a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist, dies at Panchagar, a day after his arrest.

Tota Mia, 37, a Jubo League activist, dies at Madaripur within four hours of his arrest.

November 1... Mizanur Rahman Busha, 40, an activist of the Chuadanga unit of the Jubo Dal, dies at the Khulna Medical College Hospital, two days after his arrest on October 29.

November 3... Lebu Mia, 45, a farmer of Baitihakali in Habiganj, dies. He was arrested on October 30 and handed to the police.

November 4... Abdul Haque, 32, a microbus driver, dies at the Osmani Medical College Hospital, ten days after his arrest on October 25. He was sent to jail although he was sick.

November 7... Rashedul Hasan, 35, an assistant film director, dies at the DMCH. He was picked up from his Tejgunipara residence on November 2 and the next morning found unconscious in front of his house.

November 8... Saiful Islam, 22, an activist of Chhagaloiya Jubo Dal, dies at the Feni Sadar Hospital hours after being arrested with crackers. He was handed to the police in a critical condition.

November 9... Abu Sufian, 30, dies at an army camp in Mohammapur.

November 10... 73-year-old Haji Abul Kashem dies at the Tangail General Hospital nine days after arrest.

November 19... Zahirul Islam Mia, 25, president of Ward No. 82 unit of the Jubo Dal, dies at the Mitford Hospital after, according to army, residents of Shyampur beat him up and handed him over to the troops.

An unidentified man, aged about 40, dies at the Mitford Hospital after being handed to the Keraniganj police by the army in a critical condition.

November 20... Tasu Mia, 45, a businessman at the Nilkhet Bakusha Market, dies at an army camp, a day after his arrest. Army claimed that he was run over by a passenger bus.

November 21... Masum, 30, dies at the DMCH two days after he was

picked from Fatullah.

A day labourer, Hakim, dies at the DMCH eight days after being caught in crossfire between the army and criminals at Gabtoli in the city on November 13.

Shariful Mallik, 26, dies on the way to the Khulna Medical College Hospital. He was arrested from Rupsha on November 1.

November 25... Arju Mia, 38, a BNP leader and president of the Poura Rickshaw Sramik Dal, dies at the DMCH. He was picked up from Bora of the Poura area and admitted to the Gazipur Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

November 30... Tipu Biswas, 35, a Khulna Jubo Dal activist, dies in army custody.

December 10... Abdus Sattar, a businessman, dies at the Bogra Mohammapur Hospital, two days after being picked up by the army.

December 14... Nabi Hossain Kahn, 50, a rickshawpuller, dies at Narsinghdi after being picked up by the army. His body was found in a pond in Raipura.

December 15... Jasim Uddin, 25, dies at the CMCH hours after his arrest.

December 16... Shafiuddin Swapan, 35, a Jubo Dal leader, dies at the DMCH.

Omar Faruk alias Tiger Faruk, 46, brother of Narayanganj city BNP joint convener Abdus Sattar, dies at the DMCH after arrest the day before.

Ibrahim Khalil Ibu, a Chhatra League leader of Kotbari Rampur in Comilla, dies at the DMCH, a day after his arrest.

Mir Jahirul Rabin, 22, student of Tejaiganj College, dies at the DMCH after being picked up by the army on December 4 and admitted to the hospital on December 8.

Abu Berek Rubel, 24, of Charandee of Buripukur, succumbs to his injuries prior to his admission to the Boalkhali Hospital after being picked up by the army during a drive to nab robbers.

December 20... Yusuf, 34 of Rangunia, dies at the CMCH.

January 3... Mohammad Rashed, 25, dies at the CMCH. He was arrested along with firearms from Sandwip on December 25 night.

January 6... a leader of an outlawed party dies few hours after he was arrested in Pabna.

January 8... Abdul Khaleq Sarkar, 28, a poultry businessman, dies at the Gazipur Sadar Hospital. He was arrested from Shafipur Bazar on January 6.

Mercury dips

FROM PAGE 12 old man.

The unidentified man had taken shelter at Badiakhali Government Primary school under the Sadar thana three days back to save himself from cold. He died on Friday night.

In Chandpur, two persons died in the last 48 hours raising the death toll to 11 in the district, UNB reported. Of the deaths, six were at Sadar, one each at Haimchar and Haziganj and three at Faridganj upazias.

BSS reported that six more persons including one baby died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) from cold-related diseases in the past 24 hours ending at last 1.30pm yesterday.

They have been identified as Abul Karim, 65, Kamrunnesa, 65,

Lutfur Rahman, 55, Shanti Rani, 65, Khotiara Begum, 16, and nine-month-old Waid.

More 52 patients with pneumonia, diarrheea, asthma and other respiratory complications were admitted to RMCH and health complexes in the district, sources at the hospitals and at the civil surgeon's office said.

New strategy

FROM PAGE 1 Meanwhile, around 24,023 army personnel and 339 navy men along with paramilitary BDR, police and ansars began the joint drive - Operation Clean Heart - in the early hours of October 17 last year to hunt down criminals and improve law and order across the country.

Bomb attack

FROM PAGE 12 involved in the attack.

Eyewitnesses said the alleged attackers are drug traffickers belonging to 'Adaria Bahini.'

Frequent raids on a drug trafficking point near PT crossing angered the criminals. The raids were conducted several times during Operation Clean Heart.

S I Shafiqul Islam of Khulna police station has lodged a case as complainant.

Road accident

FROM PAGE 12 taxicab driver Shah Alam, 25 and a cab passenger M Jaill, 27

They were admitted to the DMCH.

However, the police inquest report said the accident occurred when the microbus, on losing control, overturned.

South Asian Union

FROM PAGE 12 preferential tariff and 484 items on which it gets such facility from Dhaka, Sinha said. "This is not good enough."

Out of over 7,000 tariff lines, New Delhi and Islamabad have given each other preferential tariffs, the external affairs minister pointed out.

There is no point in deliberating on the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) without making any progress, Sinha said. "India is ready to enter a free trade arrangement in the SAARC any time."

He also suggested free flow of investment and services along with a free trade for goods and merchandise within the SAARC.

There is a need to work carefully on the concept of value addition and India is ready to work out a reasonable level of such value addition, which will be the same in all SAARC countries, Sinha said.

Harmonisation of tariff was an essential component of a free-trade area but it cannot take place overnight and would take time, he said.

The external affairs minister urged the SAARC countries to think of the free-trade area in concrete terms. "What we need is a strong political will and I am trying to demonstrate this political will on behalf of the government of India."

A consultant has been appointed on free-trade arrangement among SAARC countries, he told the seminar. "People-to-people contact would grow once trade moved forward."

SAARC countries should stop suspecting each other's intentions all the time, Sinha said.

dance. He also dismissed "suspicions and apprehensions" of other SAARC countries about India as "unfounded".

"Its big size and population should not be held against India because there is nothing we can do about it," he said. "We have no other desire or intention than to be able to live in peace and friendship with our neighbours and join in the common task of improving the quality of life of our people."

SAARC countries are joined together by geography and "we can neither ignore each other nor afford to be friendly and cooperative".

SAARC member-countries should be sensitive to each other's security concerns, he pointed out.

New Delhi remains committed to the "Gujral doctrine" of friendly ties with its neighbours, the external affairs minister said. Former Indian prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral, who propounded the theory, was also on the dais with the external affairs minister.

"India remains committed to the Gujral doctrine," Sinha said. "We are ready to move further ahead in the direction of peace, friendship and prosperity to all our neighbours."

The famous "Gujral doctrine" was first heard in 1996 and India today remains committed to good neighbourly policy of Atal Behari Vajpayee.

It was left to Gujral to provide the finale to the seminar. "If we take this road (as proposed by Sinha), the mistakes of the past will automatically end. If you want to pick anything from the past, it is perhaps the mistakes that we have made and how we can avoid repeating them."

Victims of lesser justice

FROM PAGE 1 said yesterday. She finished her final exams yesterday.

Till January 8, 44 people died, several thousand sustained severe injuries and several hundred crippled during the drive of the joint forces styled Operation Clean Heart that began on October 17. Abul Hossain Litu, 32, is one of the 44 who allegedly died in custody during the drive.

Litu is known to be an innocent youth, who had a small poultry farm in Savar near Dhaka, trying to eke out a living for his daughter and wife. But on October 28, members of the army raided Litu's poultry farm, tied him blindfolded to a tree, and allegedly beat him to death.

However, the ISPR on October 28 claimed that Litu was a member of the Seven Star group, a crime cartel of the city. It further claimed that when an army team went to the Dendabor, Nabinagar of Savar to haul up the criminals, Litu jumped off the rooftop of a two-storey building and fell on a boundary wall. Then, as claimed by the ISPR, the army team rescued Litu in a 'fatal condition' and took him to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) where he died.

However, the army claim lacks proof. Anjana filed a case with the First Class Magistrate's Court on December 15, seeking justice for the killing of her husband. In her appeal to the court, Anjana said army troops led by one Major Kabir beat her husband to death. The court ordered the Savar police to investigate the case.

Officer in charge (OC) of the Savar Police Station and investigating officer of the case KS Abdullah told The Daily Star yesterday, "I have achieved some progresses in my investigation. But after promulgation of the indemnity ordinance, I have stopped the investigation."

The ordinance says no one can seek justice and no complaints can be lodged against any persons involved with the joint drive for any arrests, deaths, tortures, violations of rights and any damages of physical, mental or financial nature between October 16 and January 9.

And any case related to the Operation Clean Heart filed with any court would automatically be cancelled, the ordinance says.

Termining the ordinance a barbaric one, Anjana said, "If justice can be blocked through an ordinance, then what is the use of having courts?"

"Prime Minister Khaleda Zia knows better what it feels to lose the near and dear ones. Her husband was killed in the hands of some army men and for that, 12 army officers were sentenced to death. So, why won't I get justice for the killing of my husband?" she asks.

Arif, cousin of Rashedul, said, "This crackdown on criminals means nothing more than killing innocent people. Did they arrest any top criminal during the drive?"

Away in Sylhet, Ali Hossain, brother of Jamir Ahmed, who was picked up by the joint forces and later died in army custody on November 29, put his misfortune to poverty.

"We are poor and that is why justice is not for us," he said. "My brother was severely tortured to death by the army and later, we were just informed of his death."

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the family members of Jamir said they thought of taking legal action against the army following the death. But they did not dare do so because of threats from the army.

"But now, the chance of seeking justice is blocked for ever," Ali said. His mother is still in a shock from the death of his son and weeps silently holding Jamir's photograph.

Ali, a homeopath doctor, said his brother was a carpenter and was not involved in any criminal activities. "Still we do not know why he was picked up and killed."

Jamir, 32, was picked up from his village residence at Raigarh for three kilometres off the Golapganj upazila headquarters. He was tortured by the army on the Dattarail

Bangladesh win

FROM PAGE 1 Austro-Hungarian coach's plan, sent the home crowd into raptures when with a neatly placed shot past Nepalese custodian Upendra Man Singh's left-hand post.

Interestingly, Alfaz also scored the only goal when the two teams last met in the final of the 1999 Kathmandu SAF Games.

The experienced forward needed only two minutes to make up for his blunder with his signature finishing after a Motiur Munna floater came his way via a Kanchan nod inside the box.

Motiur also set up the ace marksman up two minutes before the goal by an intelligent back heel that caught the Nepalese defence napping. But Alfaz with all the time in the world and only Upendra to beat blasted his effort over the bar.

But apart from the two quick openings in the first half Bangladesh created hardly anything to entertain the home supporters. Besides, the national team's ordinary showing ahead of their tough second Group B match against Maldives on Monday created a sense of discomfort.

Although the national team tried to make an impact in their quest for a first SAFF title, but it only end up running aimlessly in the remainder.

The passing was dreadfully off target and nobody seemed aware that holding on to the ball was just as important as shooting it.

Litu's sister Umme Kulsum says, "Did the government take the people's consent to call out the troops? The government has to take all the responsibilities for the killings."

Equally enraged was Tahmina Akhter Urmi, wife of Rashedul Hasan, who died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on November 7 after the army handed him over to the police.

"I have no longer any place to demand justice for my husband's killing," Urmi told The Daily Star at her Tejgunipara home in the city.

"Is it a country of lawlessness? Law enforcers are killing innocent people like my husband and the state is indemnifying their acts! Is it possible for any country where justice prevails?" she asked.

The army picked up 30-year-old Rashedul Hasan, an assistant film director, from his residence on November 2 and handed him over to the Tejaiganj Police Station on November 7 when he fell ill.

"I wanted to file a case at the time. But as my neighbours expressed fear of harassment, my father-in-law decided to file a case after the pullout of the army," Urmi said. "Where will I go now for justice? I don't beg alms. I beg justice. Now I seek justice from Allah."

She demanded that the ordinance be repealed and the door to justice be kept open.

Arif, cousin of Rashedul, said, "This crackdown on criminals means nothing more than killing innocent people. Did they arrest any top criminal during the drive?"

Away in Sylhet, Ali Hossain, brother of Jamir Ahmed, who was picked up by the joint forces and later died in army custody on November 29, put his misfortune to poverty.

"We are poor and that is why justice is not for us," he said. "My brother was severely tortured to death by the army and later, we were just informed of his death."

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the family members of Jamir said they thought of taking legal action against the army following the death. But they did not dare do so because of threats from the army.

"But now, the chance of seeking justice is blocked for ever," Ali said. His mother is still in a shock from the death of his son and weeps silently holding Jamir's photograph.

Ali, a homeopath doctor, said his brother was a carpenter and was not involved in any criminal activities. "Still we do not know why he was picked up and killed."

Jamir, 32, was picked up from his village residence at Raigarh for three kilometres off the Golapganj upazila headquarters. He was tortured by the army on the Dattarail

grounder past Bangladesh keeper