

Use 'SPA detention clause cautiously'

Law Commission suggests the government follow the Supreme Court verdicts and directives

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The Law Commission in a report to the Ministry of Law has observed that framing of a new law retaining the repressive detention clause of the Special Powers Act (SPA) would not improve the country's human rights situation.

The report also observed that it was meaningless to promulgate such a law keeping in place the controversial clause. Rather, the commission suggested, the government better follow the verdicts and directives of the Supreme Court on the cautious use of the SPA and putting a stop to its misuse in case of detention, according to sources.

The report says while approving a detention order the Ministry of Home

must be satisfied beyond any doubt with the rationale and evidence justifying a detention order issued by the district magistrate. The detained person must immediately be informed about the reason for the detention.

The commission also suggested that the government should promptly respond to the High Court Division's rule on the writ on a detention order.

The Law Commission submitted its report on the SPA to the law ministry on May 15 with regard to the proposed scrapping of the SPA and introduction of a similar law retaining the repressive detention clause. The government also suggested incorporating other SPA clauses into the Bangladesh Penal Code.

These proposals were sent to the commission on January 1.

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The taste of freedom

AP, Dili, East Timor

On flags, bandanas and baseball caps, East Timorese wore their national colours wherever they could fit them yesterday as they celebrated their nation's independence.

Tens of thousands gathered at a field close to the national capital Dili to witness their homeland becoming the world's newest nation on the stroke of midnight last night.

VIPs from around the world -- among them UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former US President Bill Clinton, Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio and Australian Prime Minister John Howard -- watched the show from a covered stand made from bamboo.

The locals -- parents with young children playing at their feet, students and old men and women in village dress -- sat cross-legged on the grass.

"I'm going to stay here until the flag is raised. I feel freedom, relief

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PHOTO: AFP

East Timorese men march through the capital city of Dili with a huge national flag to celebrate the country's independence yesterday.

40 IU students hurt in clash with transport workers

BSS, Kushtia

At least 40 students were injured in a series of clashes between the students of Islamic University (IU) and local transport workers on Saturday night.

The clash erupted when a bus driver of ASB Transport was beaten up by the students in front of the main gate of the university on the Kushtia-Khulna Highway.

As the news spread, transport workers assaulted 10 students, including a girl, who were returning to the campus.

Immediately after the incident the agitated students damaged at least 13 buses and trucks near the university main gate.

The transport workers then stopped plying vehicles and started beating up campus-bound teachers and students on the highway.

Clashes between angry students and transport workers soon spread to Kushtia and Jhenidah bus stations, where 30 students were injured.

The injured students were admitted to different clinics in both towns. Abdul Alim, a second year law stu

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Contractor shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A contractor was gunned down and two others injured when an armed gang swooped on them inside a club at Nazrul Islam Road in the city's Mohammadpur area last night.

The dead was identified as Neaz Ahmed Khokon, 32.

A gang of five entered the Sicily Video Club and shot Khokon, Asaduzzaman Titu and Sagir Hossain who were watching television inside the club.

The three were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared Neaz dead.

When contacted, the duty officer of Mohammadpur police said they were not aware of the incident.

Apparel exporters go for hunger strike June 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The apparel exporters will observe a token hunger strike on June 3 and will form a human chain on June 5 to protest the government's cold-shouldering their demand for export support.

They will also hold five rallies in the readymade garment (RMG) industrial belts in Dhaka, Chittagong and Narayanganj from May 26 to June 2 to press home their six-point demand.

The apparel exporters' demand includes 15 per cent cash incentive for woven, knit and Terry towel items. They said the incentive could be eliminated in three years with five per cent reduction every year.

They also sought assurance for supply of quality yarn at international prices from local sources,

otherwise the ban on yarn import through land ports be lifted. Also they demanded disbursement of all pending cash incentives by May 30.

The exporters said the SAARC regional cumulation benefit offered by the European Union should be immediately implemented and the permission to set up a central bonded warehouse in the private sector be granted.

"Amidst export slump, we have been pursuing the government for policy support. But we have not received any till today and the RMG exporters are getting frustrated," Kutubuddin Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said while declaring the protest programme at a press conference at the BGMEA office yesterday.

However, he was still optimistic about a positive decision from the policymakers to save the industry from difficulties arising out of tough competition and slump in price and demand.

Kutubuddin also said they have sought appointments with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman to discuss the demands.

The BGMEA chief dished out some dismal figures of RMG exports to the US market.

During the January-March period, the total RMG import by the US declined by nearly six per cent in volume and 11.36 per cent in value. Kutubuddin said the country's apparel exports to the US dropped by 9.33 per cent and 14 per cent in terms of volume and value respectively during the same period.

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PHOTO: STAR

Clogged-up sewer lines have flooded vast areas of Azimpur, Pilkhana and DMCH Colonies as well as Sheikh Shaheb Bazaar and Nababganj areas affecting nearly 20,000 residents for the last three or four days. The dirty sewer waters have entered gas lines as well as water pipes, disrupting gas supply and contaminating drinking water.

2 killed, 30 hurt as storm lashes Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At least two persons were killed and 30 others injured as nor'wester lashed the district early yesterday. The worst hit upazilas of the district are Sadar, Muktagachha and Trishal.

The dead were identified as Modhu Karmakar, 65, of village Laxmikhola in Muktagachha upazila and Abdul Mannan, 50, of village Konabari in Trishal upazila. They were killed in house collapse.

Over 500 dwelling houses in the three upazilas were damaged, electric poles and a huge number of trees uprooted during the storm that began at 5:00 am.

Of the injured, 10 were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, three to Muktagachha health complex while others were given first aid.

The HSC examination centre at NN Girls High School in Muktagachha upazila, which was damaged by the storm, has been shifted to Muktagachha Adarsha Girls High School.

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JP activist shot dead in N'ganj

UNB, N'ganj

A political activist, who was wanted in a number of cases, was gunned down near Langaband bazar in Bandar thana on Saturday night.

The dead, Moazzem Hossain Kalu, 32, was said to be an activist of Jatiya Party (Ershad).

Police said he was wanted in seven cases including murder and extortion.

Kalu came under attack while he was going to Langaband bazar in a rickshaw to settle a dispute.

Witnesses said the assailants shot in his head and abdomen.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

Local people said the killing took place as a sequel to rivalry over sand business. Victim's family members blamed "BNP cadres" for the killing.

A case was filed with Bandar thana in this regard.



Prof Nuruddin passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof QAIM Nuruddin, a retired teacher of Mass Communication and Journalism Department of Dhaka University, died of cardiac arrest at Sohrawardi Hospital in the city yesterday morning. He was 67.

He is survived by wife, a daughter and a host of friends, admirers, students and relatives to mourn his death.

He was laid to rest at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard after namaj-e-janaza at the DU Central Mosque after Asr prayer.

Earlier, in the afternoon, his body was taken to the mass communication department and kept there for some time to allow his students, colleagues and admirers to pay their last respect. Teachers and students wore black badges and classes were suspended yesterday to mourn the death.

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Depression turns into low

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The depression that changed into a well-marked low over the bay disappeared into the mountains of Arakan in Myanmar early yesterday.

It left a mass of clouds, which raised the temperature to a sweltering high of 38 degrees Celsius in the southwestern town of Jessore.

Before retreating towards the Arakan coast, the low caused some

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Doubly disabled



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Look of desperation... a disabled orphan, blind and paralysed from polio, begs on the city streets. Neither the government nor any non-governmental organisation has come forward for rehabilitation of such children.

NAIMUL HAQ

Fifteen-year old Majid is blind and orphan. Twelve-year old Raushan is paralysed from polio. Both beg on the streets of Dhaka.

There are over five lakh disabled and marginalised children like them in the country but neither the government nor any NGO has any programme for them, according to a study by the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID), a local NGO.

Bangladesh, as a signatory to the Declaration of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, is committed to undertake programmes for such disabled people.

The Social Welfare Directorate has a limited programme for street children but not for those with disability.

The meagre resources coming from donors and UN agencies for the disabled are mostly directed for the benefit of adult and educated disabled people who have a better chance of survival.

The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) also has no programme for the disabled children on streets.

"The street children with disability are in many ways invisible in the society. They are mostly considered incompetent because of physical defect. The negative attitudes they are exposed to is a greater problem for them than the disability itself," Herluf G Madsen, Resident Representative of Save the Children Sweden told The

Teachers' strike closes school for the disabled

REAZ AHMAD

A school for the intellectually disabled has been closed indefinitely because of the teachers' strike.

Striking teachers of the school run by the Society for Welfare of Intellectually Disabled (SWID) in the city's Eskaton area have been abstaining from classes since May 14, demanding withdrawal of termination letters served on a teacher and two support staff.

The authorities declared closure of the school on Saturday. In protest at the indefinite closure of the school, the teachers staged a sit-in yesterday.

The looming uncertainty has landed parents of the 235 intellectually disabled students at the SWID School (Ramna branch) in deep frustration.

The social welfare ministry provides 60 per cent of the salaries for the teachers in 40 SWID-run schools home to 6,000 intellectually disabled children. The Ramna branch is the oldest among all. The SWID, a voluntary organisation, was founded in 1977.

President of SWID Dr Lutfar Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday that the Ramna branch authorities were forced to close the school indefinitely, as the teachers pushed

ahead with their move for withdrawal of termination letters and for abstention from classes.

President of the Ramna branch governing body Sajeda H Kabir alleged that the striking teachers tried to halt a scheduled training programme for some teachers of other SWID-run schools yesterday.

"We decided on Saturday to keep the school closed until further notice. We (school committee) will meet the parents and decide on the next course of action," said Sajeda.

Last Thursday, Sajeda told The Daily Star, "As teachers protested terminations of one teacher and two support staff, we assured them of reconsideration of the cases of the support staff but not the teacher in question because there was a charge of misconduct against him."

President of the Association of Teachers and Employees of Schools for the Disabled Kazi Bilkis Begum claimed that three colleagues were terminated on April 30, 2002 for reasons best known to the authorities.

Following the authorities' refusal to have talks with the teachers on the termination issue, the teachers went for a 'peaceful' work abstention

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Sutrapur double murder case Prime accused Sumon, 33 others chargesheeted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Rahid Hasan Sumon and 33 others have been chargesheeted in the sensational Sutrapur double murder case.

Sumon, son of Nasibun Ahmed, president of Dhaka City Mahila Awami League, is the prime accused in the case.

Of the chargesheeted accused, 18 including Sumon are now in jail hajat while the rest 15 have been absconding since the incident.

Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted the charge sheet to the chief metropolitan magistrate's court, Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Forty people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the chargesheet. In the case filed with Sutrapur thana, it has been alleged that Mohammad Mohsin, 18, and Mohammad Saem, 19, residents of S K Das Lane under Sutrapur thana were picked up from their houses by a gang allegedly led by Rahid Hasan Sumon at about 7:00 am on September 15, 2000.

The members of the gang took the two to the Gandaria Rifle Club and tortured them for Tk 50,000 in ransom.

Later, the gang killed the victims, slashed their bodies into six pieces and dumped those into a manhole. Police recovered the pieces from the manhole the following day.

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AL worried at rising 'torture' on party men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Awami League parliamentary team at a meeting yesterday expressed deep concern at rising incidents of torture and repression on the opposition political activists across the country.

Deputy leader of the opposition and former speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid chaired the meeting on law and order at his office in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Later, he briefed the newsmen on the recent incidents of 'repression' on AL leaders and workers in Lalmonirhat and Chandpur.

He said six sub-committees of the AL parliamentary team were asked to submit reports on their respective designated divisions within a month.

A 24-member AL parliamentary team was formed few weeks back by AL chief Sheikh Hasina to monitor 'state terrorism, repression and communalism' in the country. Six sub-committees were formed with members from the main team to

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Meghna tragedy: Complaint case against 11

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A compliant case against eleven people including the owner of MV Saaluddin-2 was filed with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

At least 300 people were killed when the Patuakhali bound vessel from Sadarghat terminal in the city sank at Shatol in the Meghna on the night of May 3.

The accused include the owner of the vessel Md Mohiuddin; chairman of BIWTC; chairman of BIWTA Md Kalim Ullah; director general of shipping; DG, Directorate of Shipping; BIWTA traffic inspectors at Sadarghat Md Shahidullah and Redwan Islam; Port Inspector Sharif

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 20		6-36 pm
May 21	5-13 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-44
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation