

Amnesty call to scrap SPA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief of London-based international human rights watchdog Amnesty International (AI) yesterday suggested to Law Minister Moudud Ahmed to scrap the Special Powers Act (SPA).

Dr Irene Khan, secretary general of the AI, made the suggestion during an hour-long meeting with Moudud at his office yesterday. She came to Dhaka on December 17 on a private trip.

Emerging from the meeting, Moudud told journalists that the government would decide on the SPA 'considering the overall situation of the country'. He however added that the government was considering repealing the abrasive law.

Irene told reporters that her focus was on three issues -- speedy trial, special tribunal and repeal of the SPA. She added that Amnesty had

been opposing the SPA since its promulgation, because it was an anti-human rights law.

She noted that all governments had abused this law. But this government rode to office on the back of a landslide electoral victory and it had pledged in its election manifesto to scrap this law. So, the Amnesty expected it to repeal the law.

However, Irene added, so far during the tenure of the current regime a lot of political leaders, intellectuals and journalists were being arrested without any case. Many of them obtained High Court bail as per the law of land. But again, the government was detaining them under the SPA, violating human rights. Those whom the High Court sets free on bail should no more be detained.

The AI chief said there should be

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PHOTO: STAR
Army and BDR personnel supervise dumping of fish, trawled from a toxic WASA lagoon in the city's Shyampur area yesterday. The unabated fish culture in contaminated water bodies pose serious health hazard.

Bangabandhu Murder Govt accepts demand to appoint SPP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has accepted the opposition demand for appointment of a special public prosecutor (SPP) for the Bangabandhu murder and the jail killing cases.

In response to a letter from Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed said the government has agreed to appoint a senior lawyer selected by the plaintiffs of the cases.

The government would take necessary steps, if they applied, he added.

In his letter, Moudud also said the government would not object if the plaintiffs wanted to nominate lawyers, who assisted the former special public prosecutor.

Earlier, the government cancelled appointments of all lawyers in these two cases appointed by the previous Awami League government.

The deputy opposition leader sent a letter to Moudud, protesting the move.

When contacted, Hamid said, "It was a welcome move. However, there are some elements in the letter, which we condemn. I will soon send him the reply."

No surprise in WC squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Selectors recalled experienced all-rounder Khaled Mahmud and pace prodigy Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza for the 15-man Bangladesh squad they announced yesterday for the World Cup.

Mahmud's hopes of playing in a back-to-back World Cup appeared over when the three-men selection committee headed by Aliul Islam ignored him for the recent home series against the West Indies.

But the 31-year Mahmud got staked his claim following a string of good showing in South Africa in October. South Africa will host the 14-nation cricket carnival in February-March this year.

Agutsy cricketer and the man-of-the-match in Bangladesh's memorable upset win against Pakistan in the 1999 England World Cup, Mahmud has played 34 one-day matches.

While Mahmud become only the fourth cricketer to represent Bangladesh in two World Cups.

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The year that was... Murders drop, still way high

STAR REPORT

The number of homicides in the country dropped slightly in 2002, compared to that of the previous year, according to a survey conducted by a human rights organisation.

But it was still too high for the law and order situation to improve perceptibly. According to the survey report of Odhikar, a human rights

organisation, a total of 3,323 people were killed in 2002, while the previous year witnessed 3,412 murders. But another organisation, Bureau of Human Rights Bangladesh-BHRB, said that the last year witnessed 3,361 murders - 78 more than the number recorded in 2001.

A total of 76 people were killed and more than five hundred others injured in 187 bomb blast incidents in 2002. A total of 74 people lost their

lives and 1,294 others were injured in actions on the part of law enforcers during the time. Meanwhile, 42 people died during the Operation Clean Heart. During the year, 1,040 women were violated while 342 others came under acid attack.

One journalist was killed and 104 others were injured in 114 incidents of journalists coming under attack.

Mohammed Alam, an industrialist, and three of his women domestic

helps were slaughtered and cash and gold ornaments worth about Tk 4 core were looted from his residence in city's New Jurain area on January 1 night.

On January 9, outraged villagers beat and killed six alleged highway robbers at Sakta village in Keraniganj. Haris Ahmed, a Jubo Dal leader and two of his assailants - Partho and Mizan - were killed in the

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Malibagh killing Charges pressed against Iqbal, 23 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday pressed charges against former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Dr HBM Iqbal and 23 others in connection with the Malibagh killings on February 13, 2001.

Investigation officer (IO) of the case and DB Inspector Farid Uddin submitted the 'supplementary charge sheet' to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka.

Of the accused, Iqbal and six more are now on bail, granted by the High Court. Eight are in jail custody, eight others are absconding and one has become an 'approver' in the case.

Meanwhile, the metropolitan magistrate conducting the case expressed his surprise and resentment over reports of some national dailies yesterday that charge sheet in the case was submitted to the

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897 degree examinees expelled in 17 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 897 examinees were expelled in 17 districts on the first day of the degree (pass) and subsidiary examinations under the National University, which began amid tight security yesterday, NU sources said.

A total of 831 examinees were absent at the English first paper compulsory exam, which began at 10:30am. No teacher was expelled on the first day, said Prof. Abdul Hamid, controller of examinations of NU, when contacted last night.

No untoward incident was reported till filing of the report at 9:00 p.m.

Some 340,000 examinees are appearing in the exams at 611 centres under six divisions. The university authorities have decided to take stern action against the violators of the rules set by them.

To prevent adoption of unfair means, the NU authorities have formed about 700 centre-based vigilance teams comprising officials of local administration and teachers from different universities and colleges.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 1		5-22 pm
Jan 2	6-42 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-27	5-32
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation