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INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HOPES TO VISIT INDIA THIS MONTH

In a letter to the new Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, Amnesty International reiterated its desire to visit India soon to research its broad range of concerns in the country.

The organization also expressed its hope that the new government would commit itself to strengthening human rights protection in India.

“We would like to be able to visit all parts of India routinely, as we are able to do in countries throughout South Asia,” Amnesty International said today. “India has a stated policy of openness and transparency in the field of human rights -- we urge it to translate this into reality”.

The organization clarified media reports on 3 June of comments made by the Chairman of India’s National Human Rights Commission about the status of Amnesty International’s requests for access. Press reports claimed that an Amnesty International delegation proposed to visit Jammu and Kashmir in July or August and that this had been agreed to by the previous Indian government of Narasimha Rao.

“While Amnesty International would welcome independent access to Jammu and Kashmir, we have not received any indication from the Indian government that we would be allowed to visit,” the human rights organization said.

“Our current request for access is to Delhi, Rajasthan and Karnataka. We would like to meet with human rights groups, including those working on issues related to women.”

An Amnesty International request to visit India in February-March of this year was refused by the Indian government in a letter stating it would not be suitable, “in view of the impending general elections”. In recognition of this, the organization had modified its request to dates after the general election in late June/July.

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