



Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina wipes her tears during the speech of journalist Obaidul Haq at a discussion on National Mourning Day at Diploma Engineers' Institute auditorium in the city yesterday. Peshajibi Samannaya Parishad organised the discussion.

## Govt nurtures militancy, terrorism

### Speakers say at regional meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a regional discussion yesterday suggested proper investigation of bomb blast incidents by trained persons and trial of cases as per law to curb security threat in Bangladesh.

The two-day discussion on 'Security and law: South Asian perspective' was organised jointly by Odhikar and South Asian Network against Torture and Impunity (SANTI) at Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

Taking part at the inaugural session, Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta said terrorism and militancy is protected and nurtured by the government in Bangladesh.

In support of his claim, Suranjit cited government's initial steps against militants and keeping top kingpins in sub-jail ignoring the jail code, its 'failure' to investigate major bomb blast incidents and find out the attackers, and its 'reluctance' to hold hearing of Bangabandhu Murder Case and arrest seven

absconding accused.

Terming Jamaat-e-Islami a fundamentalist organisation, Suranjit posed a question how the government would resist militancy when Jamaat is a component of the four-party ruling alliance.

"Jamaat and the militants have the same objectives- militants carry out activities from outside while Jamaat works from inside the government," he said.

Suranjit also referred to killings in the name of 'crossfire' and said the government permitted such extrajudicial killings since the indemnification of Bangabandhu's assassins.

Speaking as chief guest Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said Suranjit's accusations are baseless.

He said Jamaat is not a fundamentalist organisation.

Moudud said during its five years' rule, the AL did not complete the trial of Sheikh Mujib Murder Case as they wanted to keep it alive for political reason.

He said the AL also did not arrest the absconding accused during its tenure.

Moudud said eight major bomb blast incidents took place during the AL regime, but the then government did not arrest anyone.

Dr Ahmed Ziauddin, an international legal expert, in his keynote presentation said reasons behind security threats are mixed with ideology, religion, nationalism, ethnicity, culture, economy and natural resources.

"We live in a much more dangerous world than anytime before where, because of globalisation, technology and other factors, smaller groups and even individuals could cause havoc," he added.

Dr Ziauddin said in this fast evolving world, nature and actors of threats to security change frequently and unexpectedly.

In fact, non-state actors, organisations, loose networks and even unconnected individuals could pose grave national security threats than ever before in present days as opposed to conventional threats emanating from another state, he added.

"States have responded very

differently to traditional and to these new brands of national security threats and concerns largely by introducing new laws and measures, and even, on occasions, acting beyond laws," Dr Ziauddin said.

There are widespread legitimate concerns about impacts of floods of new laws on individuals and societies both at national and international levels, he added.

Dr Ziauddin said questions abound whether laws, intended to provide safety and security, are restricting freedoms in reality, or restrictive measures, put in place, deny space and freedom that in turn can create further or aggravate resentments.

Chaired by Odhikar Advisor Farhad Mazhar, the discussion was also addressed by Susan Ward of Academy for Educational Development (AED).

Representatives from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are taking part in the meeting.

## Alliance govt pushing country towards constitutional crisis

### AL leaders tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top Awami League leaders yesterday said the alliance government is pushing the country towards uncertainty and constitutional crisis as it is unwilling to implement electoral reforms, which are a must for free and fair elections.

The ruling alliance is also playing a political game over the issue of dialogue with the opposition and has made all the preparations for 'election engineering' by politicising the civil administration, Election Commission and even the judiciary, they said.

"We have put forward a number of reform proposals and called for discussion on them, but the government has created confusion about the issue," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at a national seminar on 'Practice of democracy: Importance of free and fair elections in Bangladesh'.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (Bilia), Bangladesh Heritage Foundation, Democracy and Human Rights Research and Citizens' Council for South Asian Solidarity jointly organised the seminar at a city hotel.

Speaking at the seminar, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the country has all the pre-conditions for democracy and that the democratic institutions only need to be strengthened.

He urged all to brush aside bitter experiences of the past in their speeches and look forward to strengthening the democratic institutions and making the parliament effective.

The minister also suggested making the Speaker of parliament neutral, giving the opposition lawmakers in parliamentary committees better status and creating an environment for them to play their due role in making parliament accountable.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said, "We, the opposition, submitted about 2,000 questions to the PM in parliament, but none of them was answered while the Speaker has played a partisan role by not allowing us enough time to speak."

Separation of the judiciary was not possible until now, as the government does not want it, he said.

Referring to the formation of an election monitoring group with the NGOs, Jalil said, "The international game with the politics of

Bangladesh must be stopped."

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the leader of the opposition, said if proper investigations into all the bomb blasts, including August 21 grenade attacks on an AL rally, and arm hauls are not conducted and the culprits not punished, there will be adverse impact on the next elections.

Stressing the need for dialogue on the reform issue, he said that while BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan speaks of one-to-one meeting, the prime minister

elections will be in time, which would lead the country to crisis."

In his keynote speech, Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said the first and foremost reform that is needed is not in the law, but in the composition of the EC that must be composed of men of unimpeachable integrity and character, who are fearless, thoroughly impartial and not purchasable at any cost.

Supreme Court Advocate Dr Shirin S Chaudhury, Wali-ur Rahman of Bilia presented two

keynote papers while Justice KM Sobhan and Barrister Amir-ul Islam presided over the sessions.

AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu, AL lawmaker Promod Mankin, Forrest E Cookson of Research and Development Centre, Dr Owen Lippert of National Democracy Institute and Kim McQuay of The Asia Foundation also spoke at the seminar.



Law Minister Moudud Ahmed and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil discuss a point at a seminar at a city hotel yesterday while Wali-ur Rahman of Bilia and Forrest E Cookson of Research and Development Centre look on.

says there is no need of dialogue.

Due to highly politicised civil administration, the ruling alliance will virtually remain in power even after its term expires, Saber said.

The government has appointed DCs (deputy commissioners), SPs (police superintendents) TNOs (Thana Nirbahi Officers) on political considerations and politicised the EC, he added.

AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said the voter list being prepared by the EC is acceptable to none but the ruling alliance. "So, I don't see any possibilities that