

National security council a must to fight terrorism

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security experts at a seminar yesterday recommended constituting national security council (NSC) to combat terrorism successfully.

They also laid emphasis on strong political will, training up of law enforcement and intelligence agencies and zero tolerance to firearms trafficking.

The two-day seminar styled as 'A Strategy for Combating Terrorism in Bangladesh' was organised jointly by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) and British High Commission at BEI conference room in the city.

The seminar was held in nine sessions focussing on different aspects of terrorism.

Speaking at the concluding session, the speakers said confrontational politics contributes in many ways to terrorism which is largely home-grown, and the nation needs to unite to address the root causes of the menace that include poverty, unemployment, poor governance, injustice, illiteracy and corruption.

Apart from local measures, regional cooperation which is not up to the mark, needs to be boosted up, they added.

"Given political will, it is easier to combat terrorism in Bangladesh as situation is not as complex as in neighbouring countries that are fighting the menace," said CM Shafiq Sami, a former diplomat who recently resigned from the post of adviser to caretaker govern-

ment adding that the government must be firm at this moment to handle the situation.

"Instead of taking media reports on militant activities in the northern part of the country seriously, the immediate-past government reacted angrily. It however initiated steps few months later after the militants banded to the fore, but much blood spilled in the meantime," he said.

The former secretary also called for stopping human rights violation saying terrorism is prompted by such violation.

Reaz Rahman, former adviser of foreign ministry, underscored the need for a multifaceted fight against terrorism.

Saying that fundamentalism and extremism were alien term to people of this country, he stressed the need for a stringent law that may award death sentence to the patrons of the terrorists.

Detailing the steps taken by the immediate-past government, Reaz called for a durable framework to address the issue and a three-tier short, medium and long-term steps to fight terrorism successfully.

There was a deliberate attempt to prove Bangladesh as a den of terrorists, he said.

Presenting his paper, BIIS Research Director Dr A Rob Khan focused on the recommendations of the previous eight sessions.

BEI President Farooq Sobhan proposed for constituting the NSC with the prime minister (PM) as its head to

work as the coordinating body in the battle against terrorism.

Ministers and secretaries for home and foreign affairs, heads of three services, chiefs of two intelligence agencies, principal secretary and an international affairs adviser will be the other members of the committee which may take suggestions from the civil society, he added.

Director of Counter Terrorism Bureau Brig Gen ATM Amin presented the keynote paper on 'Developing a counter-terrorism strategy for Bangladesh' with former parliament member Faruk Khan in the chair.

BIIS Research Fellow Neela Hussain Chowdhury was the key speaker on 'Curbing the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and explosives' with Maj Gen (Retd) Syed M Ibrahim in the chair.

Former minister of state for foreign affairs Abdul Hasan Chowdhury presided over a session styled 'The rule of law and good governance in curbing terrorism' with former inspector general of police Nurul Huda presenting the keynote paper.

Air Commodore (Retd) Ishfaq Ilahi presented a keynote paper on 'Religious motivation and social mobilisation in curbing terrorism' with Prof Syed Anwar Husain of Dhaka University presiding over the session.

Dr Anwara Syed Haq wins Ananya Literary Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Anwara Syed Haq was awarded 'Ananya Literary Award 1413 (Bangla)' yesterday for her outstanding contributions to literature.

The fortnightly Ananya organised the award giving ceremony at Sufia Kamal auditorium of National Museum in the city.

Dr Anwara received a crest and Tk 50,000 from the chief guest Prof Kabir Chowdhury.

Dr Anwara, professionally a psychologist, is the 12th authoress to receive the award. She has written in various forms of literature that includes novel, short story, essay, travelogue, autobiography and child literature.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal and Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam addressed the function as special guests presided over by Ananya Editor Taslima Hossain.

While discussing the literary works of Dr Anwara, author and publisher Mofidul Haque said that the reflection of profession is prevalent in Anwara's writing through which she enters into the deep insight of the whole society.

Sultana Kamal said multidimensional identities of human being in different contexts, including society and politics, are visible in Dr Anwara's literary works.

Kabir Chowdhury hoped that the concerned political party would retreat from its decision to surrender before communalism.

US philanthropist Soros arrives today

George Soros, an American financier and philanthropist, will arrive in Dhaka today, says a press release.

During his visit, he will launch "TB Policy in Bangladesh: A Civil Society Perspective", a joint publication by his international philanthropic organisation, the Open Society Institute, and Public Health Watch following the launch of the first State of Health Report by Bangladesh Health Watch.

DHAKA TODAY

Art competition

Samay organises a children's art competition to mark its 10th founding anniversary. Venue: Aziz Super Market. Time: 10:00am.

Memorial meeting

Rhythmic Cultural Society will hold a memorial meeting to pay tribute to the 15 army officers who died in Benin air crash while working for the UN Mission. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Memorial lecture

Ain O Salish Kendra organises Salma Sobhan Memorial Lecture to mark the 20 years of its being. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Reunion

A reunion of the ex-students of Motijheel Central Government Boys' High School will be held. Venue: School premises. Time: 8:00am.

Inauguration

The inaugural ceremony of Mechanical Engineering Conference (MEC) and 11th Annual Paper Meet (APM) will be held. Venue: Engineers' Institute. Time: 9:30am.

Roundtable

Nirbas Foundation Bangladesh will hold a roundtable titled 'Measures to improve the standard of Madrasa education: Bangladesh perspective'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:00am.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Anwara Syed Haq receives 'Ananya Literary Award 1413' from Prof Kabir Chowdhury at National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday. Ananya Editor Taslima Hossain, second from left, Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, extreme left, and former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal, extreme right, are also seen.

All parties to participate in upcoming polls

Hopes British High Commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury yesterday said he is optimistic that all political alliances will participate in the upcoming elections.

He made the comment after a meeting with Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina last evening.

Choudhury, however, also stressed the need for minimising the abuse of the imperfect voter list in all aspects of the election process.

"I am optimistic the alliance look to be strong in their engagement to participate in elections," said Choudhury to reporters after an hour-long meeting with Hasina at Suhda Sadan.

"The good news is that we have reasons to be optimistic that there will be participatory elections," said an upbeat Choudhury, adding, "We are hopeful that everybody can participate in the elections on the 22nd."

When asked whether he thought the Saturday's agreement between AL and Khalif Majlis on certain issues might affect religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya, he said, "No matter what the nature of the alliances are, I hope that freedom of speech, the maintenance of human rights and respect for the freedom to practice one's religion will remain within the people and the political parties of Bangladesh."

On the controversy over the voter roll, Choudhury said, "There are no perfect voter lists," but, "What is important is the voter list has to be backed up by the other

processes that ensure that excess voters cannot be abused."

Choudhury said the voter list is a single issue and it alone cannot prevent a free and fair election, adding that there is much to work on the voter list for the caretaker government and there is a need to implement the checks and balances that prevent the system from being abused.

When asked about British contribution to the elections, Choudhury mentioned that over 1 million pounds sterling have been provided by his government to different organisations that are working to facilitate the electoral process and raise awareness on electoral issues.

British observers would be sent through the European Union, which is set to establish a full team, Choudhury added.

Advocate Khandakar Mahbub Hossain chaired the meeting while Subrata Choudhury, M Enayetur Rahim and Abdul Halim spoke.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bar Council in a statement yesterday condemned filing case against the eminent lawyers. It termed the case 'false' and politically motivated.

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