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PM reiterates call for consensus to root out terrorism from campus

Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated her call for national consensus for launching a concerted move to strike out terrorism from university campuses as well as from society.

Everyone wants sound and peaceful academic atmosphere in educational institutions so that students can study without any impediment and acquire knowledge. No one wants to hear clattering of arms in educational campuses, the Prime Minister added.

She was speaking at a discussion meeting organized by VOA Fan Club at a local hotel on Wednesday on the role of VOA in eradicating polio by the year 2000.

The Prime Minister said when she was the opposition leader she had proposed all-party move to eradicate terrorism from educational institutions and to suspend student politics. She unilaterally placed moratorium on political activities of the students, she said.

Sheikh Hasina noted with regret that she failed to elicit matching response from the then Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. As a result, her initiative to suspend student politics and wipe out terrorism,

from campuses flopped then, Sheikh Hasina added.

Explaining her government policy, the Prime Minister stated it stood for crushing terrorists with iron hand regardless of their party affiliations.

Referring to the killings of 1974, she said the killers were put on dock and punished for their commissions. The Prime Minister noted with anguish that Shafiu Alam Pradhan who was convicted of the charge of masterminding killing of seven persons were later set free by late President Ziaur Rahman for organizing a political party for him. What will be the state of law and order if persons convicted of killing are released, she asked.

She declared amidst loud applause that if 'consensus' were reached she might order shoot-at-sight any person found with arms inside educational campuses. Sheikh Hasina said her administration is sincere about freeing educational campuses of terrorism.

The Prime Minister said the Awami League government was thrown out through bloodshed. We have returned after long 21 years on the

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strength of popular mandate, she said. She further said she did not take recourse to bloodshed, although it was victim of bloodshed. Awami League believes in democratic values and that is why it did not resort to bloodshed.

Underlining the urgency of creating public opinion in support of terrorism-free campuses, the Prime Minister said if all parties decide not to harbour terrorists, it will be possible to root out terrorism from educational institutions. If one party takes to field with arms, it will be difficult to prevent another party from going out with arms.

APB says: Hasina regretted that she had been criticised by an opposition political leader for her Tuesday's statement in parliament in which she said that shoot-on-sight order could be given against terrorists on the campus.

"But I must speak the truth... Already there is a law to shoot on sight, but it is not enforced usually.

BSS adds: Turning to the main theme of the occasion, the Prime Minister said her government has plans to eradicate polio by 2000 through successfully launching the EPI programmes. "We believe in the hypothesis of prevention is better than cure," she said and expressed her hope that the country's children would soon get rid of the curse of being crippled by polio disease.

She lauded the decision of Voice of America for launching worldwide campaign against polio and said this is a noble task. She also appreciated the role of VOA and said during the nation's turbulent days of War of Liberation as well as in all other movements for restoration of democracy and people's fundamental rights, VOA played a significant and commendable role.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf, State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed, Chief of Voice of America Bangla Service Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury and Bangladesh Coordinator of VOA Fan Clubs Syed Asaduzzaman Bachchu also spoke on the occasion.