

Control of madrasa education urgent

Speakers urge govt to end attack on freethinkers

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Adopting the constitution of 1972, banning and trying Jamaat-e-Islami for war crimes in 1971 and enforcing control over madrasa education's curriculum are required to stop the current onslaught on free thinking by fundamentalist, terrorist forces, speakers told a discussion yesterday.

They urged the government to take the above steps at a discussion, "Constitution of '72: A prescription for War Crimes Trial and Resisting Fundamentalist Terrorism", organised by Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee at WVA auditorium in the capital's Dhanmondi.

The discussion was in observance of the 44th anniversary of the constitution's enactment and dedicated to late Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, a former member of the committee.

"If Jamaat is not tried and banned then this ongoing terrorism cannot be stopped," said Shahriar Kabir, the committee's acting president, adding that fundamentalist terrorist groups were listing and killing freethinkers just as the political party had done to intellectuals in 1971.

He termed Jamaat the godfather of organisations like Harkatul-Jihad, Ansarullah Bangla Team and Ansar al Islam,

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extremist groups claiming responsibility of many of the recent killings of bloggers and a publisher.

Law Minister Anisul Huq said the cabinet would approve by March an amendment to International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973. He also said the trial of blogger Rajib Haider's murder was expected to be completed this month. Rajib was the first blogger to be murdered in February 2013 for expressing his free thoughts on social media.

When Kabir pointed out Muntassir Mamoon's research on how the government-financed Alia Madrasa's curriculum denounced nationalism and secularism, the minister said he would raise the issue at a cabinet meeting.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof. Mizanur Rahman said the trial of Jamaat or banning Jamaat can never be under a "cooked-up" constitution which did not go back to its four original principles of nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism.

The constitution says Islam is the state religion and the principle of secularism must be relaxed.

Referring to the government's failure to ensure women's equal rights in property and family matters, which are governed by religious laws in the country, freedom fighter Ayesha Khanom asked the government if they were refraining from such changes to appease a certain quarter.

"Those who you are trying to keep in good humour by adopting appeasement policy, have they begun to control us now?" asked Khanom, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a women's rights organisation.

Barrister Tureen Afroz, a prosecutor of International Crimes Tribunal, and Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad General Secretary Rana Dasgupta also spoke.