

Proceedings

Seminar
on

Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options



BISS Auditorium, Dhaka
Thursday, 28 July 2016

Organised by



**Bangladesh Institute of International
and Strategic Studies (BISS)**

Seminar on
***Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh:
Response Options***

on

Chief Guest: Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP

Hon'ble Foreign Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Organised by
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)
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Published by

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)
1/46 Old Elephant Road,
Eskaton, Dhaka-1000
Phone: +880 2 9353808, 8315808, 9336287
E-mail: info@biiss.org
Web: www.biiss.org

Printed by

GraphNet Limited
95 Naya Paltan, Khan Tower
1st Floor, Dhaka-1000
Phone: 9354142, 9354133
E-mail: graphnet@gmail.com

Seminar on Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised a Seminar on “Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options” on Thursday, 28 July 2016 at BISS Auditorium. **Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP**, Honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh graced the Inaugural Session as the Chief Guest and **Mr. H. T. Imam**, Political Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was the Chief Guest of the Closing Session.



The Seminar was divided into four sessions including Inaugural and Closing sessions. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired the Inaugural Session. The First Working Session was chaired by Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, Former Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh. Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd), Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh was the chair of the Second Working Session. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh chaired the Closing Session. Nine presentations were made by academics, experts and high officials during the sessions of the Seminar. High-level military officials, scholars, academia, officials from law enforcement agencies, policy makers, former and current government officials, members of diplomatic corps, representatives from development partner organisations and media were present and participated in the open discussion sessions. They highlighted and deliberated on various aspects of recent violent extremism within and beyond Bangladesh.

Inaugural Session

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the Welcome Address at the outset of the Seminar. This was followed by the Introductory Remarks of **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS. Thereafter, **Major General Md. Abdur Rashid psc, G (Retd)**, Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS) made his keynote presentation. Afterwards, the Chief Guest of the Inaugural Session **Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP**, Honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh made his valuable remarks. The session was chaired by **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS.





Welcome Address

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc

Director General, BISS

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS in his address stated that Bangladesh as a developing and Muslim majority country boasts an extraordinary example in curbing terrorism and violent extremism in the contemporary world. Ever since the outbreak of extremist incidences in the mid-2000s, the country has had successfully curbed terrorism and prevented its spread through all kinds of necessary anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism measures.

However, in recent years, the country has witnessed some renewed incidences of terrorism and extremism, this time, somewhat different in nature in terms of content, tactics and weapons that are being used by the extremists. Nevertheless, they remain negligible especially in the contemporary era of religious fanaticism.

But, on 2 July 2016, the country has experienced its first ever hostage crisis by the extremists that ended with an heartbreaking casualties of our foreign friends and locals, posing a daunting challenge to our understanding of the nature of terrorism and extremism in Bangladesh as well as the expertise and capabilities of our defensive anti-terrorism mechanisms.

The Sholakia Eidgah Attack takes acts of terrorism in Bangladesh to a level where the intention of the extremists to wreak havoc in terms of mass casualties is explicitly evident.

This necessitates the urgency to rethink and redefine our discourse on terrorism and counter-terrorism, and make all-out efforts involving all stakeholders to curb and prevent its proliferation.

He expressed his high expectation that the deliberation including the presentations and open sessions would add to the discourse of identifying the challenges of counter terrorism in Bangladesh and would also propose necessary policy suggestions to the government for devising appropriate response measures.

Keynote Presentation



Nature and Current Trend of Extremist Violence in Bangladesh

Major General Md. Abdur Rashid, psc, G (Retd)

Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS)

Major General Md Abdur Rashid, psc, G (Retd), Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS) in his keynote presentation stated that Bangladesh has experienced two kinds of violent extremism since its birth. A new kind of terrorism appeared in the 1990s over the political horizon known as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), an organisation formed in 1992 by returnees of Afghan battle, hurled bomb in 1999 on Udichi, a secular cultural platform, in the guise of *ji*had. Under the leadership of Mufti Abdul Hannan, numbers of attacks were launched causing deaths of many innocent civilians. The bombing of Ramna Batamul in 2001 carried special significance to its nature. The grisly grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina on August 2004 was also significant of its kind.

Regarding recent terrorist attacks, General Rashid said that the attack on Holey Artisan Restaurant on 1st July 2016, during the holy month of Ramadan causing deaths of 17 foreigners, 3 Bangladeshis and 2 police officers have shaken the tolerant social fabrics of Bangladesh. It certainly instilled fear and panic in home and abroad equally and this attack was followed by another attack on Sholakia Eid congregation in Kishoreganj district. He mentioned that Islam has been used as the driving philosophy for these violent attacks. These terrorist attacks have raised several questions in the mind of people - Why killing innocent people? What are the objectives of the attacks? Who is performing such attacks? Islamic State – the global terrorist organisation has claimed the responsibilities of the attacks. Does it mean that Bangladesh terrorism is an integral part of global terrorism or an isolated movement?

General (Retd) Rashid argued that the recent terrorist activities are violent and cheap tool of political manifestation. It has political master, artificially made appealing ideology, patronised economically and works under the political umbrella of open parties to secure individual interest or embolden mutual interest of formed alliance based on convergence of interest irrespective of their location at home or abroad. He said that to establish the just cause for illegal invasion and aggression causing unabated genocide, killing, raping and enslaving other nations or tribes, the religion or Islam has been used historically by many invaders and invading empires. Same had been experienced in the liberation war of Bangladesh where genocide, killing, raping, etc., have been rampantly perpetrated by the Pakistani occupation forces and domestic Islamist political parties in the guise of Jihad. Extreme violence had been used as a political tool to protect the integrity of Islamic Republic. Being vanquished, these groups had no

repent but made orchestrated attempts for their re-emergence in the newly born state with the aid of Pakistan and other unseen actors who intended to retain control over this land for their geopolitical interests. After the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, these forces reappeared, rejuvenated under the umbrella of political parties in power. The undemocratic governments made full use of Islam-card to establish the justness of their power clinging and continued to destroy or decay the secular fabric of the Bangalee nation. The first group of terrorist outfit appeared in the name of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B) in 1990s. These unlawful violent forces started attacking on secular elements of the nation and the country had first experienced orchestrated and planned attack on Udichi, a secular cultural body in 1999.

General (Retd) Rashid then pointed out that Islamist terrorist outfit had never targeted Islamist or allied parties like Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) Bangladesh or Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) although these violent radicals vowed to fight against democratic institution. The discrimination led to conclusion that what has made them immune to terror attack being parties of democracy is for being the mother of the all terrorist outfits in Bangladesh.

Talking about the organisational structures of terrorist organisations, General Rashid opined that over the period the terrorist outfits changed their organisational structures, based on change of leadership or avoid being on the intelligence RADAR. After HUJI, new outfit appeared as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) whose five out of seven top leadership came from Jel. The first group of terror organisations had a tendency of mirroring al-Qaeda and Taliban of Pakistan and the second generation had copied al-Qaeda and third generation such as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) followed Islamic State. He also added that beside organising terror outfits, a well-orchestrated and carefully planned and divergently supported radicalisation scheme has been put in place firstly, to change social life of the country and secondly, to recruit terrorist or Jihadis to maintain the momentum of the terrorism. He argued that to screen the actual patronising, the causes of terrorism have been attributed on absence of democracy, lack of rule of law and good governance despite country's rapid growth. Rapid economic growth, social emancipation and development of the country reject appeal for extremism, violence and jihads. To change the idea, such terror tactic has been used to isolate Bangladesh from global and regional interaction, he added.

General (Retd) Rashid informed the audience that current trend of terrorism in Bangladesh has its origin by killing of Blogger Rajib Haider who was an activist of *Gono Jagoron Mancho* appeared over the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) verdict on Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Abdul Kader Molla. From 2013 about 70 terror attacks have been carried out and about 52 in last 18 months on diversified targets including innocent minorities and foreigners. Recent Gulshan attack reveals desperateness among the terror outfit and employment of critical assets for the first time in Bangladesh. Terming cyber linkage of local terrorist outfits with Islamic States (IS) a deception measure General (Retd) Rashid opined that it has been done to sensitise international communities of the crisis and install fear and panic among the innocent people. Discrediting law enforcing agencies and government capacity to ensure security for its citizen is another motive of that.

General (Retd) Rashid emphasised that divergence of radicalisation has posed a new challenge to the nation. Involvement of elite society both student, teachers and businessmen has exposed new dimension of threat which has alarmed international community. Identifying foe and friend has now become more difficult than ever before. He added that nature and trend of violent extremism in Bangladesh often misinterpreted and based on wrong attributes. Political linkage to terrorism has confounded the complexity of the trend. He concluded his presentation by saying that terrorism in Bangladesh is indeed home-grown, oriented to domestic political agenda, and patronised by domestic political agenda as well. He suggested that Bangladesh in this context should use its own knowledge, experience and judicious judgement to counter violent extremism; at the same time due assertion need to be placed to the development partners' cooperation and support.



Address by the Chief Guest

Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP

Honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in his remarks noted that terrorism is a global challenge. Almost every day, there is news of such despicable incidents in one part of the world or the other. No country is free from this scourge. People of many countries including Bangladesh experience horror of these extremist acts.

He mentioned that this is succinctly emphasised by the recently concluded Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 15 July 2016. Following the recent terrorist attacks in Europe and Asia and in many other places, ASEM leaders strongly condemned the heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks perpetrated, resulting in the unacceptable loss of innocent lives and countless injuries.

People of Bangladesh are still mourning the loss of precious lives in the gruesome attack of 1 July 2016 at Gulshan. Before that, in the last two years, the country witnessed clandestine attacks against writers, online activists, publishers, foreigners and religious minorities. The Gulshan attack, however, was the first large scale and coordinated terrorist act, which was unprecedented in the history of the country. This was followed by another terrorist attack on 07 July 2016 at Sholakia. This was however thwarted by the police in that the terrorists could not attack the Eid congregation. However, two policemen and an innocent housewife lost their lives while a terrorist was killed and another apprehended. There was another attack at Kalyanpur in Dhaka where police was able to foil the aim of the terrorists while nine terrorists were killed with one injured terrorist arrested.

He argued that from these barbaric attacks and other murder incidents in recent times, it is clear that certain vested quarters are trying to destabilise the country and halt its advancement. They want to create a sense of fear and insecurity. They also want to tarnish the image of Bangladesh and discredit the Government both at home and abroad. These vested groups do not like the secular values that the government is promoting. Unfortunately, to achieve this agenda, religion is being used as a tool and means.

He informed that government has responded very promptly to the recent terrorist acts. After the two tragic incidents, security measures have been strengthened all over the country to prevent recurrence. The security forces remain on high alert. At any cost, government will break the nexus of terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation and will eliminate them from Bangladesh. Law enforcement agencies have been working relentlessly to unearth the masterminds of the extremist acts. They are also verifying, whether the extremists are receiving any guidance from the international terrorist groups.

He also noted that the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given strong directives to root out terrorism and militancy from the country. She has asked to strengthen the existing anti-terrorism committees

and community policing at district, upazila and union levels. She called on guardians to keep a watch on their children so that they cannot be misguided. Hon'ble Prime Minister also instructed the law enforcement agencies to collect information of missing youths and help the parents to trace their missing children.

Mr. Mahmood Ali added that as the government undertakes immediate and short term measures, long term measures are also needed to prevent the people from becoming radicalised. Keeping this in view, the government is focusing on awareness building among the people against terrorism and violent extremism. Government is also working closely with civil society, religious leaders and private sector for advocacy against violent extremists. Both media and mosques have become our important partners in the awareness building campaigns. Imams of Mosques have been trained and instructed to communicate with local people with correct narratives of Islam. A social movement against extremism generated already in the country, where people from all sections are coming together.

Honourable Foreign Minister noted that in addition to domestic efforts, government is working closely with other countries, regional organisations and the United Nations to fight this menace. Bangladesh has joined the Global Community Resilience and Engagement Fund (GCERF) as a founding member. GCERF is a public-private partnership, which was established to serve as a global effort to support local, community-level initiatives to strengthen resilience against terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh has volunteered to be a pilot beneficiary country for the GCERF projects. Recently, GCERF has signed grant agreements with some local NGOs, which are going to implement projects in designated areas of the country.

He hoped that the peace-loving people of Bangladesh, inspired by the secular and non-communal ideals of Liberation War, will overcome the current challenge as they have done in the past.





Remarks by the Chair

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad

Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS expressed his deep gratitude to Honourable Foreign Minister, Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP for gracing the Inaugural Session as the chief guest. He also expressed his delight to have Major General Md. Abdur Rashid, psc, G (Retd) as keynote speaker. He mentioned that the Seminar has two main purposes. First, to discuss the recent wave of extremist violence in Bangladesh. Why has this suddenly broken out? Who are the possible main drivers of this phenomenon? What are the motivations behind such acts in a moderate and peaceful society like Bangladesh? And secondly, to search for response options to address the security threats from extremist violence. The issue is sensitive, and demands serious attention by all. He also highlighted that the designated speakers are drawn from different parts of the society, including politicians, security analysts, academicians, businessmen, diplomats, religious experts, doctors, civil servants, researchers, criminologists, military and police professionals.

Ambassador Ahmad stated that extremism and violence are as old as human history. In recent times, this phenomenon is cutting across boundaries and spreading all over the globe. No country today is immune of this danger. History tells that no particular community or religion supports destructive violence. It is a few misguided people who resort to violent extremism or terrorism in the name of religion or ideology. Threats from extremist violence emanate from a multitude of actors ranging from lone perpetrators to well-organised groups. They include domestic radicals as well as terrorists from international terror outfits. In recent times, threats from violent extremism are undermining security and development across the world.

Ambassador Ahmad noted that Bangladesh has also experienced occasional spikes of extremist violence since independence. He narrated the evolution of terrorism in Bangladesh. He however, mentioned that the recent spate of target killing followed by the gruesome Gulshan Restaurant massacre and Sholakia Eidgah attack indicate that extremist violence in Bangladesh has morphed to a further new and different level. The perpetrators have aimed at attracting global attention by killing foreigners, religious minorities, atheists, LGBTs, and bloggers with differing religious views and opinions.

The government of Bangladesh has adopted a 'zero-tolerance' policy in response to the serious threat to national security from these violent extremists, Ambassador Ahmad informed. However, there is a need to educate the people about the various specific elements and aspects of the policy. Although the government's measures include new legislation, educational reforms and societal efforts involving religious and community leaders, in addition to the robust law enforcement efforts, these efforts need to be gelled into a comprehensive and holistic campaign involving all stakeholders and transformed into a social movement. There is need to develop a full-fledged and cogent counter-narrative to enthuse the people and prevent them from being misled by the extremists or radicals. Another very important and vital question that is being discussed in this connection by Ambassador Ahmad is the need for international collaboration, its nature and extent, in combating this transnational and worldwide scourge of violent extremism

First Working Session

Four distinguished speakers, **Mr. M. Ashique Rahman**, Research Fellow, BISS, **Mr. Shahab Enam Khan**, Chairman, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, **Allama Fariduddin Masud**, Principal, Jamiah Ikra Bangladesh and Former Director, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh, and **Dr. Mekhala Sarkar**, Psychiatrist, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) made their presentations in the first working session. This session was chaired by **Ambassador Muhammad Zamir**, Former Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh.



Presentation-I



Changing Trend of Global Terrorism: A Historical Perspective

Mr. M. Ashique Rahman

Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

Mr. M. Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) noted that terrorism is nothing new; it has been there for centuries or even for millennia. And there is a need to adopt an historical perspective to understand the changing trend of global terrorism, since, “terrorism” as a ‘tool, technique and method’ over the centuries exhibits a changing nature. He discussed about various definitions of terrorism to highlight the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism; however, it is important to define terrorism since how terrorism is defined has serious policy implications and informs response measures. He mentioned about six elements of terrorism as identified by Lutz and Lutz (2008), i.e., the use of violence or threat of violence with an intention of creating fear or terror; perpetrated by an organised group; to achieve political objectives; the violence is directed against a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims, who are often innocent civilians; a government can either be the perpetrator of violence or the target – at least one has to be a non-state actor; and terrorism is a weapon of the weak.

The history of terrorism dates back millennia. The first instance of terrorism can be found as early as in the first century in the Roman Empire, perpetrated by the Jewish Zealots in the province called Judea, seeking to liberate their land from alien rule. In pre-modern days, groups and individuals also used political violence against authority and elites to achieve certain political objectives. In the late 11th century there were also instances of terrorism in the Middle East as some governors, political and military leaders were also assassinated by their extremist opponents. Modern day terrorism, however, started in the 1880s in Russia and the perpetrators had been the Anarchists. To discuss the history and changing nature of terrorism since then, Mr. Rahman adopted the analytical framework of David Rapoport, who distinguishes between four waves of terrorism; each with its own ingredients, different audiences, sympathisers and supporters; modus operandi; and each last for few decades – three to four – then fades away.

The anarchism of 1880s was started in Russia and then spread to other parts of Europe, the Americas, and Asia. The anarchists were motivated by the doctrines of Russian writers such as Bakunin and Kropotkin. They used new technologies and communication tools of the time i.e., telegraph, newspapers, etc. The most notorious of these anarchists was Russian Narodnaya Volya (the people’s will) and they killed a Russian Tsar.

According to Rapoport, 1890s was the Golden Age of Assassinations as a number of Head of State were assassinated during this time viz., Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, Umberto I. King of Italy and the US President McKinley. The second wave terrorists were the anti-colonialists and the time frame is 1920s. Their fight involves struggle for self-determination against the British and the French colonial rule, and they used the Guerrilla tactics of warfare. The most prominent of such anti-colonial extremists had been the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and interestingly, extremist groups in this second wave also include IRGUN – a militant Zionist extremist group fighting the British.

The new left wave of 1960s, also called 'Red Terrorism' is the third wave of modern terrorism. The most glaring example of this wave is the Vietnam War, where extremists used again Guerrilla Warfare and also the tactics of kidnapping and hostage taking. The 1972 hostage crisis of the Olympic Games in Munich of Israeli Athletes by the Black September is a very well-known incident of this time frame. The fourth wave or final wave, according to Rapoport is the religious wave that started following two major world incidents: the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Afghan War during 1979-1989. In this phase of modern terrorism, religion or religious theology has been used as an organising ideology of extremism. It has to be emphasised that this 'terrorism by using religion' is not particular or peculiar to the religion of Islam. All world religions since 1979, used their own theology to inspire and motivate their followers to resort to violence and terrorism. The Sikhs of Punjab of India used religious precepts to organise extremist violence against the Indian authority from the famous Golden Temple with the objective of establishing independent statehood for themselves called Khalistan. One conservative group of Christians in USA initiated the anti-abortion militancy in United States and bombed some of the Hospitals where such procedures were carried out. Even a religious sect in Japan, namely, Aum Shinrikyo carried out a terrorist attack in the Subway of Tokyo by releasing nerve gas Sarin in 1995 and killed 12 people. In fact, this was the first and so far, the last terrorist incident where the perpetrators used a weapon of mass killing or WMD.

If we look at the changing nature in modus operandi of terrorism, a transformation in modern times is clearly evident. Imparting reign of terror, intimidation, be-heading, assassinations, kidnapping/hostage taking, bombing, targeting civilians, suicide bombings, and use of modern technology – internet, social media, websites, audio-video hosting etc., are all comprise modern day tools and techniques of terrorism, which an end result of transformation. Mr. Rahman also discussed about al-Qaeda and Islamic State (ISIS) as they epitomises modern day transnational terrorist network and groups. While fighting terrorism or devising appropriate response measures, Mr. Rahman suggested to comprehend the counter measures not only at the tactical level but more focus should be given at the strategic level identifying the strategic objectives of the terrorists. Only military, law enforcing or hard power will not achieve success against the terrorists; their causes have to be defeated at the strategic and ideological level.

Presentation–II



Terrorism and its Transnational Linkages in Bangladesh: Beyond Border, Beyond Ideologies

Mr. Shahab Enam Khan

Associate Professor and Chairman

Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University

According to **Mr. Shahab Enam Khan**, Associate Professor and Chairman, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, the government, particularly the highest leadership, has a strong commitment to combat militancy and terrorism with “zero tolerance”. The commitment has been reiterated by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. To materialise this commitment, government has taken a number of initiatives; however, a number of factors are yet to be addressed. Bangladesh presents a complex structure. Base indicators are demographic transition, education and employment, social transformation and growth of information technology, law enforcement, politics of blame-game and conspiracy theories. The growth is phenomenal; yet there are massive inequalities. Employment remains problematic. About 40 per cent of the population is underemployed; many persons counted as employed work only a few hours a week and at low wages. Unemployment rate among the age group 15-24 years is 9.3 per cent where male is 08 per cent and female is 13.6 per cent (2005). An estimated 47 million people were below the national poverty line in 2010. Continued rapid growth in per capita income will help reduce poverty further, but the ability of higher growth to lower poverty is hampered by growing income inequality. High inequality also creates social tensions and tends to contribute to social and political instability.

However, the recent lists of terrorists, killed or detained, present various economic dimensions – not conclusively limited to affluent section of the society, he added. The so-called educational reform is largely focused on “re-correcting history” rather than making it truly practical. The country is now country of “private universities” and “private TV channels” – the toll is now in front of us. Government’s priorities have been completely outdated and under constant revisions – reforms are dubious and at times unrealistic. There is a lack of market-education synchronisation. Education system remains vulnerable to multiple controversies. Lack of oversight and commercialisation of education creates asymmetric opportunities for the students – tuition fees, localities, and class segregation. Social transformation is occurring that shifts from orthodox social structure to more liberal social structure. It is creating new social dynamics and expectations: role of the state, social institutions, democratic institutions, and class stratification. Social contract between the State and the individual is changing beyond the speed of the State’s speed. Economic growth and inequalities are presenting new social problems – alienation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation – leading to radicalisation. ICT is empowering the youth yet it is empowering the rogues too – transnational in nature. Public service

delivery remains below expectation. Education is inadequate to deliver pluralism, social tolerance, value system based on the ongoing transformation and social psychology. Social media responded faster than the law enforcement in the case of the Holey Artisan massacre. In fact, we have done better than most other countries – given the examples of the recent Paris or US attacks, in combating a terror situation. But it has also exposed our limitations too – grave intelligence failures – repeated attack at a same location, preparedness of Police, capacity and quality of policing, recruitments of Police at the field level. As a part of anti-militancy drive, which was declared publicly beforehand, from June 10 till June 15, 2016, 11,684 people, including 166 suspected militants, were arrested, according to a statement of police headquarters.

Since September 2014, about 15 suspects have been arrested for “having or trying to establish contacts” with Islamic State (IS), according to police press releases and briefings at different times. According to police, the UK citizen, Samiun Rahman alias Ibn Hamdan, was in Dhaka to recruit fighters for IS, a global militant organisation based in Syria and Iraq. According to Singapore Home Ministry - the detainees were planning terror attacks including assassinations to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh. Besides, it is said that the suspects had plans to go to Syria to join the Islamic State group. Singapore had arrested 27 Bangladeshis, who supported al-Qaeda and ISIS, between November 16 and December 01 last year. 26 of the arrestees were deported to Bangladesh. Missing youth of Bangladesh are often found receiving education/supports from external actors. Premature comments by the political leaders on the investigation lead the way to confusion and lack of confidence creates rumours that deepen panic among the mass. The issue of militancy is a national security concern which needs to be seen above political consideration. Media's role needs to be reassessed as it often creates space for popular attention which leads to attain the media objective of the militant groups. Lack of accountability in the part of the law enforcement agencies and a number of political leaders often pave paths for public dissatisfaction against the political establishment – an objective of the militant groups. Therefore, these base indicators lead us to three inter-related hypotheses. First one is on homegrown terrorists. JMB and ABT are acting as platforms to unify multiple actors willing to raise dissent against the state, or the society, or the economic inequalities. Another one is about ISIS. It is kind of MacDonald's syndrome. Multiple sources indicated their presence in Bangladesh. However, it is disputed as the claims of Daabiq are not often credible. Ideological and virtual presence is possible. Super-smart group of people are involved in this ideological and virtual presence. They call BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami as “Coalition of Murtadin”. Another is about home grown-international nexus. In this regard, immediate actions like police reform, PR strategy for the government actors, establishing a Centre for training of the law and intelligence agencies on Counter Terrorism (CT) and Counter Radicalisation (CR), developing comprehensive CT and CR strategies, effective interagency collaboration and cooperation – coordination, effective implementation of the National Broadcasting Policy, refraining from using coercive words, etc., can be taken. In the mid-term, addressing the problems of education, value system, and social progress, international cooperation to learn and share – intelligence, experience, technology, expertise, effective city planning and effective community engagement are necessary. In the long run, reversing the process of inequalities, counter narratives “owned” by the society, counter online radicalisation, educational reform and international cooperation to monitor students studying are necessary. Therefore, the government needs to effectively reach out to the community.

Presentation—III



Religious Explanation about Extremist Violence in Islam

Allama Fariduddin Masud

Principal, Jamiah Ikra Bangladesh and Former Director, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh

Allama Fariduddin Masud, Principal, Jamiah Ikra Bangladesh and Former Director, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh expressed his gratitude for giving him the opportunity to share his knowledge and thoughts in this seminar. He expressed his concern about the lack of proper attention on exact reasons of terrorism and finding out ways to tackle it. He urged for a comprehensive attention on extremism, violence and radicalism. He said that people all are looking at one problem from different dimension. It is like watching an elephant from seven directions. None can see the whole elephant in one look. So the issue of terrorism cannot be categorised in terms of social context, religious context, educational context, etc.; he suggested a unified approach to face the problem of terrorism.

He explained what Islam said about terrorism from a theological point of view. In Bangladesh and around the world, militants are doing wrong in the name of Islam. Allama Masud tried to explain these evil deeds from Islamic perspective. He stated that the religion of Islam is all about love. It preaches love, compassion, mercy not only for humankind but for all living creatures. The whole creation is the family of Allah. This has been attested by various authentic narrations of the Prophet of Islam Himself. He gave the example of the Bukhari Sharif (Hadith). It says one sinful woman went to paradise for saving a dog's life while a pious woman went to hell for killing a cat. In one hadith, Prophet (swt) asked his companions about what is the best practice? Some one answered prayer, some one answered pilgrimage. Then most of them requested Prophet (swt) to answer that question. Then Prophet (swt) answered that the best practice in Islam is to love people and the animal kingdom as well. In another hadith, Prophet (swt) went for a walk with his companions and one of his companions beating the bush and hedge plants without any reason. Then Prophet (swt) asked his companion that why he was beating the plant. Then he answered that he was just doing that without any reason. Subsequently, Prophet (swt) ordered him to stop beating and said that without any reason no one has the right to beat a plant or even tear up any single leaf from a tree. Because everything is the creation of Allah and a single leaf also remembers Allah. Islam clearly declared that without any reason it is strictly prohibited to even tear up leaf of a tree. Allama Masud showed example of another hadith regarding this. He said that one day a prophet was bitten by an ant. So he ordered to burn down the whole dwelling place of the ant. After that incident, it was ordered by Allah that no one has any right to kill any creature of Allah.

He also showed example from the Quran which says saving one human life is equal to saving the whole humankind while killing one life equals to killing the whole. He clarified that this statement does not mean that only Muslims should be saved. Moreover, a non-Muslim living in Muslim society should be prioritised when it comes to the safety of his/her life, property and dignity.

He put emphasis on the mental health of young generation which is deteriorating alarmingly. This is one of the important reasons of becoming a terrorist. Only law enforcement force cannot handle this issue. Allama Masud strongly protested suicide and any kind of suicidal attempt. He expressed his grievance by saying that today's terrorists do terror attack by wrongly using Islam and their main target is to kill themselves as well. He clarified the issue that suicide is banned in Islam. The Prophet (swt) said promoters of violence will not even smell paradise. Suicide is banned in Islam and funeral prayers for such people are banned as well. Nowadays, terrorists are ready to kill themselves by suicide bombing or killing themselves after killing others. Allama Masud said what terrorists believe that he or she will be rewarded **Jannat** or paradise after killing non-Muslim is not true. Terrorists believe that he will be rewarded beautiful woman if he kills non-Muslims. Allama Masud strongly protested that type of wrong and misinterpreted idea. He showed example from one hadith that if any Muslim killed a non-Muslim who was living in a Muslim society, then the murderer would never ever go to the heaven even he would not get the smell of the heaven. He urged to the relatives of the militant to try to know the reason of his or her deteriorating mind. A militant who attacks and kills innocent people by using misinterpreted Islamic hadith should be questioned. The reasons of using wrong connotation of Islam should be identified.

He identified Islamic militancy as a disease. He urged for a coordinated effort to cure this disease of extremism. Clerics, religious scholars, jurists must be the first respondents in that regard and make people understand that Islam is not a violent faith as thought from extremists' crimes.



Presentation– IV



Psychological Motivation of Youths Behind Extremist Violence

Dr. Mekhala Sarkar

Psychiatrist, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Dhaka

Dr. Mekhala Sarkar, Psychiatrist, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Dhaka said that the whole country is currently passing a very difficult and puzzled time after the shocking incident of extremist's attacks which have compelled to confront a situation and some questions. Along with the issue of safety, senses get puzzled and reasoning become confused that kids, the youth are involved in this dreadful bloodshed, becoming the blind and brutal killers of innocent citizens in the name of Islam. Youth never showed any hesitation in taking active participation in any act for the dream of changing world or in response to the 'perceived injustice'. So, the current phenomenon is not something very new though recent trend of such a gruesome violence, slaughtering of people in the name God, is certainly a new horrifying experience for the mankind, she argued.

Dr. Sarkar stated that radicalisation into terrorism is not the product of relative economic condition, brainwashing, criminality, mental illness or deep Muslim faith. The potential for radicalisation is dependent upon seeking fulfilment of some psychological needs, which is met with a response of proper propaganda, presentation, and group psychology within extremist group. However, before understanding the psychological factors that motivate young people to become terrorist, there is need to understand the young mind. Adolescence is a difficult period when a person becomes aware of themselves as a separate individual, with a sense of vulnerability and fragility. They start understanding different ideas, concept, views about existing surrounding i.e, right-wrong, morals, ethics, politics, religion, social views and technology etc. They like to vent out their energy in adventure, in creativity and heroic activity. The routine mundane life is their reality but a colourful, adventurous world is their aspiration. So, internal urge to glorify their lives by doing something great for any reason is very important characteristics of youth. They like to do some heroic act for community, country, people, even for lover. So, the need to establish their own identity to the people who show interest in them becomes much more important. Besides, adolescents feel closer to those who value and respect their views and they feel themselves respected as an individual.

She said that based on a review of the existing literature three common motivational themes mostly play role in young mind towards extremism which are identity, perceived injustice and belongingness. The need for identity and belongingness to an extremist group helps to alleviate their sense of separateness and

strengthens their identity. Policy makers should be alert on the point that this connectedness, this sense of belongingness, this affiliation could be extremely powerful when this strong cohesion could happen in mind, in the virtual world. When the virtual connection takes place, it does not necessarily remain so much virtual, it may take the shape of reality. The force could be beyond imagination as it has the power to be connected within any areas in global scale. So, this new phenomenon of connecting people in the globe is one of the main challenges of the state.

Perceived injustice has long been recognised as a central factor in understanding violence. The recruiting agency instils the ideas to others that they do not act in a social vacuum, and that what they think, feel and do is powerfully shaped by the broader historical circumstances in which they are compelled to live and act. They do not belong in a secular world that often mocks and challenges their religion and identity as Muslims. Their primary motive is not particularly a specific religion rather than an idea, which has been able to find out an apparent meaningful purpose of life and personal significance in terms of its heroic tone and romantic appeal. So, youth gets attracted to the extremism in response to their perceived injustice, while tempted to the black-and-white nature of absoluteness of the idea without any examination. Their dearth of knowledge, lack of maturity failed them to challenge the ideas. For the very reason, these whimsical youth get easily trapped by the external appeal of the call and unable to see the stark darkness in its core.

She provided certain recommendations to prevent this phenomenon or demotivate those already radicalised. Firstly, cohesion among family members should be strengthened. Relations among family members should be based on mutual respect and youth should feel valued in their family. Their questions, ideas and curiosity should be listened attentively. Their taste, questions and friends should not be ridiculed anyway. Kids' interaction with others even in virtual media should be supervised but must be in a respectful way. Adequate entertainment should be ensured in the family. Entertainment must not confine to isolated enjoyment. Their enormous physical and mental energy should be addressed and properly channelised. In this regard they should be facilitated with cultural activities, books, outdoor games and other extracurricular activities etc. Aggressive video games and reckless driving should be discouraged. Secondly, religious teaching in family and school should not be confined to some rituals rather focus should be given on teaching the core essence. The true meaning and philosophical view of Quran should be taught to every kid by learned persons having proper knowledge. Enlightened Muslim scholars, Imams and religious leaders should come forward. Open debates could be arranged in media, in schools and in community. Supervised and scrutinised religious cells could be formed at government level. Thirdly, the course curriculum of any medium should include the information on our heritage, culture, history and basic information of our country. National anthem, promise to country etc in assembly should be compulsory component to every school and should be ensured by government. The government should ensure all sorts of cultural activities, debate clubs and self help works in every schools. It is also the responsibilities of the government to ensure that school academic activities are not based on only 'private coaching'. Fourthly, role modelling is important. During the growing period, the action of adults, especially important ones could influence them a lot. So, the life sketch of eminent personality of the modern world could be incorporated in school course curriculum. Besides, speech of powerful orator in any specialty should be regularly arranged in school. Finally, the role of media is also crucial. They should bear in mind that when state uses counteraction to combat terrorist attack, it may drum up greater anti-state sentiment among citizens which ultimately favours terrorism. Media should be particularly responsible and should have a common policy how they are portraying the news of terrorism. At the end, she provided further recommendations: a) formation of National Research Team; b) formation of National Support Centre; c) formation of IT Cell; and d) formation of Religious Education Cell.

Open Discussion



Brigadier General M. Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd), Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh asked Allama Fariduddin Masud about three issues. Firstly, he wanted to know whether there is any mention of 'Fundamentalism' in Islam. Secondly, he wanted to know the meaning of 'Jangi' and mentioned that he did not find the relevance of this word in terrorism. Thirdly, he said that the word 'Jihad' is a very pious word in Islam and it is misused by the terrorists by giving wrong explanation of Islam.

In response, **Allama Fariduddin Masud,** Principal, Jamiah Ikra Bangladesh said that there is no mention of the word 'Fundamentalism' in Islam and it was first used in the USA by a group of Christians. On the meaning of the word 'Jangi', he informed that the origin of the word 'Jangi' is rooted in Persian language which means belligerent and the concept of belligerent is criticised in Islam. He suggested that it is better not to use the word but as it is a widely used word in Bangladesh so it is tough to stop using this word. In telling about 'Jihad' he mentioned that the use of the word 'Jihad' in terrorist activities inspires the terrorists and urged everyone not to use the word in regard to terrorism.



Ambassador Shamsheer M. Chowdhury, BB at first, thanked the speakers for their insightful presentations. He mentioned that religious extremism and radicalism are societal phenomena that sometimes are encouraged by violence and political divisions. He urged all political parties of Bangladesh to form a political consensus based on core democratic values to denounce violence and to form a secular society. In this regard he quoted Edmund Burke and said,

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

H. E. Mr. Iwan Wiranata-Atmadja, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Bangladesh thanked BIIS for organising the Seminar and also thanked the speakers for their



enlightening lectures. He said that the problem of extremism is a global ideological battle that must be dealt with appropriate ideology and for proper de-radicalisation, it is necessary to go to the epicentre of the problem. He also said that the extremists who are in the prison might radicalise other prisoners which might create another challenge for the countries who are fighting them.

Ambassador Dr. M. Afsarul Qader talked about two issues. Firstly, he told that all of the speakers presented from different segments of the society with different perspectives and he wished that the issues presented by them would be taken into consideration by the policymakers. Secondly, he mentioned that the terrorist activities by the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)** were the most violent forms of terrorism in the 1980s. Regarding terrorism, he also informed about Hassan al-Sabbah who was a missionary in the Alborz Mountains of northern Persia and founded a militancy group whose members are often referred as 'Assassins'.



Dr. M. Enamul Huq, Former Inspector General of Police, Bangladesh suggested that for security reasons it is important for the law enforcement agencies of Bangladesh as well as for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to find it out that how many foreigners from different countries are overstaying in Bangladesh without visa and valid documents.

Major General Mohammad Ashab Uddin, ndc, psc (Retd), Former Ambassador, compared the recent terrorist attacks of Bangladesh with Yemen as both of these countries have many similarities and shared his personal experience in his capacity as the ambassador of Bangladesh to Yemen. He said that Bangladesh needs to educate its people about terrorism and radicalisation. He criticised the citizens of Bangladesh for overreacting. He urged for a single spokesman to circulate terrorism related news so that people do not get confused and have access to authentic news.



He also criticised the intelligence agencies for their failure and stressed on to improve their capacity.

Ambassador Nasim Firdaus, Executive Director, Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership, emphasised on some of the response options regarding terrorism and radicalisation. She argued that absence of psychological counselling in school, lack of vocational training and absence of human resource development policy are responsible for radicalisation of youths.

She also stressed on adult education and opined that many women lack proper understanding of religious education. She argued that it is very important to start religious education for adults so that mothers can help their family members to understand core values of religion.

In response to Ambassador Firdaus's comment on psychological counselling, **Dr. Mekhala Sarker**, Psychiatrist, NIMH replied that mental health counselling should be provided in every school. She highlighted that a lot of adolescents are passing difficult

time and due to various reasons they are prone to derailment and can fall prey to easy target of the terrorist outfits.



Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) stressed on openness of the society and argued that we should increase the limit of our tolerance for all sorts of views. He suggested that youths should be engaged in multiple activities and they also need vocational training which should be incorporated in standard education curriculum.

Lt Gen (Dr.) Mohd Aminul Karim, ndc, Idmc, psc (Retd) asked a question to Dr. Mekhala Sarker regarding the identity crisis of youths and asked for further clarification of the views of Mr. Shahab Eman Khan.

In response, **Dr. Mekhala Sarker**, Psychiatrist, NIMH said that youth consider themselves as separate entity in the society. The need for identity prevails among young persons. She stressed that this need of identity should be addressed by the adults; that is, adults should try to understand their questions; understand what they say; respect their views; make them confident so that they cannot be easily influenced by others.



In replying to General Karim's query, **Mr. Shahab Enam Khan**, Chairman, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University informed that Abu Md. Al-Adnani, who was the spokesperson for ISIS, has given a fatwa that people should not wait for anyone's permission to commit any terrorist attack. If they have no money, they can still use rock, knife or even a car to kill the infidels. Any small action against infidels would be appreciated by the ISIS. Mr. Khan argued that this type of statements motivated youths to commit such kind of terrorist attacks which are very hard to counter. He added that any person's thinking at the cognitive level cannot be monitored.

This has empowered the terrorists to operate like a lone wolf. He also mentioned that Bangladesh had different kind of social set up during the time of independence and in 1980s. But now, to communicate with someone and sharing information is not a problem at all. The policy making is no longer the same that is used to be in 1980s and 1990s. The power of state is eroding and the government has to deal with it.

Mr. Faiz Sobhan, Research Director, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) commented on the issue of ISIS. He argued that there is a debate going on in Bangladesh regarding the existence of ISIS. It is important to note that ISIS does not physically send fighters to carry out terrorist attacks. We have to recognise the fact that ISIS is a brand. ISIS is recruiting thousands of male and female from different countries. He wanted to know from the panel regarding the existence of ISIS in Bangladesh. He also raised a question to Dr. Sarker about youth radicalisation.



In response to Mr. Sobhan's query, **Dr. Mekhala Sarker**,

Psychiatrist, NIMH said that lack of knowledge, integrity of the society, socialisation etc., are mainly responsible for youth radicalisation. Poor socialisation is leading the youths to a confined area. In addition, growing sense of lack of significance of their life also makes youths vulnerable. She argued that only satisfying materialist need is not enough. She suggested that youths should be encouraged to involve in different creative activities. Huge energy of youths should be utilised by the policy planners of Bangladesh.





Remarks by the Chair

Ambassador Muhammad Zamir

Former Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh

Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, Former Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh expressed his gratitude for being the chair of the first working session. He recalled the remarks of the Honourable Foreign Minister, Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP and distinguished keynote speaker Major General Md. Abdur Rashid psc, G (Retd) on how extremist violence was evolving in Bangladesh and in the region. He also evoked the discussion focused on the types of violence such as home-grown violence, global aspect of violent extremism and socio-political agenda associated with the evolution of extremist violence, etc., and existing changes in targeting pattern.

Ambassador Zamir recalled the past scenario of cultural aspects which was so rich and widely practiced. He stated that culture plays a very important role in bringing about sense of belongingness. He expressed that now-a-days this practice is missing. For that reason, he urged the government to come up with necessary steps in this regard. After that he ended the session by thanking all the participants and panellists to make valuable contribution to this seminar.

Second Working Session

Four distinguished speakers, **Professor Dr. Md. Ziaur Rahman**, Chairman, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka, **Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc (Retd)**, Treasurer, University of Asia Pacific, **Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur**, President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), and **Md. Moniruzzaman**, AIG, Bangladesh Police made their presentations in the second working session. This was followed by an open discussion session. This session was chaired by **Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd)**, Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh.



Presentation-I



Engaging the Vulnerable Youths in Constructive Activities

Professor Dr. Md. Ziaur Rahman

Chairman, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka

Professor Dr. Md. Ziaur Rahman, Chairman, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka said that for a long time a relationship between poverty and criminal activity has been observed. There are lot of theories developed in the USA in this regard such as Robert K. Merton's 'Strain Theory' and Oscar Lewis's 'Culture of Poverty Theory' etc. People have encountered these sorts of relationships in the 1980s and 1990s in the political arena of Bangladesh especially in Madrasahs and Public Universities. But recently in Holey Artisan Bakery attack it was observed that attackers were from students of English-medium Schools and Private Universities with affluent family background. So, the question is, whether the relationship between poverty and the extremist militancy that people of Bangladesh encountered during the 1980s and 1990s launched by a certain militant student organisation called Islami Chattra Shibir has disappeared or not? There can be two hypotheses: a) there is a relationship between militancy and poverty; and b) there is also a relationship between militancy and affluent young people as a result of globalisation; both appear to be correct. Neither the relationship between poverty and religious extremism has totally disappeared nor these types of extremist activities are now done only by the affluent generation. There lies an intervening variable that is political motives. So, in both cases, what we found in the 1980s and what we are encountering now a day are organised by political activists who do not want to see the development and progress of Bangladesh.

Talking about religious extremism, Professor Rahman mentioned that religious activities are sometimes treated as movements. At present, the international politics is the major cause of frustration developed among the Muslim communities, immigrants and diaspora living in different parts of the world which motivated them to engage in different subversive activities. According to him, some other causes of religious extremism are – hegemonic politics of the US which is responsible for the creation of monsters like Saddam Hossain, Osama Bin Laden, Muammar Gaddafi etc. In addition, horrendous education system and lack of cultural activities are also responsible for radicalisation of student and youths which influence them to indulge in terrorist activities. He stressed on highlighting the social structure of a society which is very important in the discussion of terrorism and violent extremism.

Professor Rahman then discussed on how two consecutive military regimes of Bangladesh had used the international politics and different kinds of parochial activities to consolidate their power. Professor Rahman said, "General Zia amended Article 38 of Bangladesh Constitution and he gave permission to the core Islamic political parties like Jamaat-e-Islam, Nizam-i-Islam, Muslim League etc. who were banned after 1971. He

also repealed Presidential Order No. 8 which allowed twenty thousand criminals to assimilate into the society." According to him, these activities helped to energise the criminals who were against the independence of the country in 1971. They were also patronised by state resources and important positions within the government like ministers. This adversely affected the secular values of the society.

Professor Rahman opined that the impact of international politics increased when the world entered into the era of globalisation and the events like 9/11 created frustration among the Muslims all over the world. That frustration spread through different channels like internet, emails, social media etc. Bangladesh is also passing a transitional period which developed countries like United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) experienced long ago. As a result, these sorts of anomalies, deviant behaviour and criminal activities are common issues in this juncture. According to him, apart from different kinds of crimes and deviant behaviour, Bangladesh has recently encountered a new kind of criminal activity in the form of militancy and religious extremism. The Holey Artisan criminal attack has revealed that the generation all over the world has developed into a different kind of personality structure from previous generation. But it is not their fault. Invention of new technologies, isolation and alienation from family, friends, community, mainstream politics, culture and commercialisation of education are mainly responsible for this deviant behaviour. These are the main constraints that researchers have found among the new generation of students from affluent families who are mainly studying in English-medium Schools and Private Universities.

Referring to the theories of Melvin Kohn and John Bowlby, Professor Rahman mentioned that lack of engagement, attachment and bonding among the family members influence human behaviour and criminal activities. This also happens in Bangladesh, especially among the students from affluent families. He added, "If we identify the major problems in relation to the development of youth and student's personality and behaviour, we can accommodate in the social movement." Professor Rahman stressed that these are social issues and the people of Bangladesh never think about how sociological and psychological aspects are pertinent to address these kinds of social challenges. He also gave an example of US in this regard.

Professor Rahman concluded his speech with some suggestions and recommendations to combat radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism which include emphasising family ties and bonding, participating in cultural and extracurricular activities, community and social engagements etc.

Presentation-II



Engaging Concerned Stakeholders in Effective Consultation to Raise Awareness and Building Community Resilience

Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc (Retd)

Treasurer, University of Asia Pacific

Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc (Retd), Treasurer, University of Asia Pacific noted that Bangladesh state had often been in a denial mode, first, in the late-1990s when JMB, HUJI and LeT raised their heads. Initially, the reports were dismissed as myths created by the media, their violent attacks on public places causing multiple deaths were regarded as self-inflicted wounds by the opposition political parties to discredit the government. As the attacks became widespread, the government of the day came under increasing international pressure to take serious action against the perpetrators, namely JMB, HUJI and LeT etc. During 2006-2007, many of the militant leaders were apprehended, some were prosecuted and punished. It appeared that the war on terror has been won in Bangladesh. But it was not to be, the terrorists had reorganised themselves and despite constant pressure from the security forces, they could regroup, rearm and retrain to launch new series of attacks over the last two years. There are new players on the scene; besides JMB, there are others such as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), recently renamed as Ansar-al-Islam who is active both in madrassas and schools and the ubiquitous Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT). It appears that these groups have proliferated in public and private universities and colleges across the country. HUJI and ABT have a global agenda of establishing an Islamic Khilafat by means of violent Jihad.

However, terrorist activities gathered new steam from 2013 onward with series of attacks on bloggers; the government was again on the back foot terming these attacks as isolated incidents caused by people whose religious sentiments were hurt due to outrageous remarks on the blog sites by those writers. The next phase of the attacks targeted Hindu, Buddhist and Christian priests and temples.

The attack on Holey Artisan Bakery and Restaurant on 01 July 2016 has raised the ante in counter terrorism efforts. Since that date, new questions are being raised on the strategy and tactics to best counter the threat. Meanwhile, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), a specialised anti-terrorism force, has released a list of more than 200 people who are reported by their families as missing. While not all, at least quite a few of them are likely to have joined terrorist organisations at home or abroad. Most of these youths studied in top public and private universities, medical and cadet colleges; some of them are children of military officers, civil bureaucrats and political leaders. While some of the recruiters and their handlers might be from Islamist parties, such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), most of the new recruits had no political past; in fact, many led a cosmopolitan life of drugs and drinks before turning radicals.

With this backdrop, he recommended various steps at different levels and different institutions to stop further radicalisation of youth and to de-radicalise those who have already become radical.

Family Level: encourage closer familial bondage; avoid family quarrel, dispute or separation; lead an ethical life; prevent loneliness and depression in children; maintain close touch with the child's school; notice a sudden change in behaviour; not to pressure to do better in exam; provide for sports and healthy entertainment; give more time to family, include elders whenever possible; let the child grow up, do not over-protect; seek psychiatric help, when necessary.

Peer Group Level: choose friends carefully; join clubs and sports activities arranged by the University; join various recognised social activities' clubs; bring your friends to meet your parents, avoid doing things in their absence; spend more time in free air and less time in front of the computer; avoid drugs, alcohol or other additives, like smoking.

Religious Institutions: mosque must not be used to spread hatred and violence; mosque committee, Imams and Muezzins must be carefully selected and their activities monitored by local administration; mosque fund and its expenditures to be carefully monitored; regulating Khutba and Waaz; publicise recent Fatwa against militancy, let mosque be a place of social congregation where Islam's eternal message of peace and social harmony is promoted.

Educational Institutions: revise curriculum to add greater emphasis on national identity; observe national days to inculcate patriotism; provide space for sports, culture, literary and outdoor activities, patronise activities such as scouts, guides, BNCC and other youth organisations; keep close watch on prayer halls, libraries and other common spaces; notice sudden behavioural changes in an individual; carefully screen teachers and staff; maintain close contact with students and their parents; arrange open day for parents; open free psycho counselling centres within the educational institutions.

Educational Reform: introduce uniform education stream up to 12th grade; bring Qawmi Madrassa and the English Medium schools in line with the mainstream education; strict supervision of text books to promote democracy, rule of law, communal harmony and reject extremism of all sorts; withdraw recognition of O and A level exams and GED; revise all syllabus of higher studies in the country to introduce more liberal arts subjects as optional in all technical courses.

National Agenda: display strong political commitment against all forms of extremism; ban use of religion to achieve political advantage; reject communalism in all its form; build national unity against extremist activities; raise public awareness against terrorism; create a friendly Police-Public relationship to elicit support in counter terrorist operations; include religious leaders in the campaign against religious extremism; use mass media to raise awareness.

However, it has been a failure of the country's law enforcement agencies that so far only the foot soldiers have been caught, but still law enforcement agencies have not been able to catch any of the kingpins behind the scene. Unless and until law enforcement agencies are able to nab the masterminds, the threat of further radicalisation of youth and thus of terrorist activities within Bangladesh cannot be ruled out.

Presentation—III



Impact of Terrorist Violence on Business and Suggested Counter Measures

Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur

President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI)

Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur, President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) has identified three reasons that the Gulshan attack is a game changer. First, affluent area frequented by foreigners is chosen. Second, attackers planned for a prolonged hostage crisis to gain international media attention but did not plan to survive and finally the victims bore signs of gruesome torture. The two pillars of the economy of Bangladesh are remittances and the RMG. The first large scale attack to focus on foreigners could shake both these pillars unless this was a one off or there is an internationally credible response by Bangladesh, he opined.

He stated that Bangladesh is and will remain for the foreseeable future an export and remittance driven economy. So, the loss of confidence in the security environment and state security apparatus could be potentially damaging for attracting investment and gaining access to markets for people and products. Major selling point of Bangladesh to the outside world has been our “moderate” Muslim majority society. A deterioration in the security environment may scupper the success of Bangladesh’s booming textile business. The unstable security environment is now the biggest threat to the country’s economic outlook. Vietnam, another low wage economy competing in the same industries as Bangladesh has a much safer security environment, he mentioned.

All lives are precious but some are more than others. Italy, Japan, India, USA, the countries that lost their citizens are all important partners. Japan is the largest bilateral donor for Bangladesh. It disbursed US\$366 million as foreign aid in 2015. Japan recently signed 37th ODA package for Bangladesh of US\$1.65 billion highest ever at 0.01%, repayment 40 years, including 10 years grace period. 230 Japanese companies have invested US\$250 million in Bangladesh. Japan provides duty free quota free access to its huge market which has allowed exports to reach US\$615 million. Japan also provides crucial support and investment in sectors such as disaster management, infrastructure development including deep sea port and metro rail. Italy is a major export and import destination. The amount of trade is US\$1.17 billion which is an important source of remittances. It is an important member of EU which is our biggest export market. India is one of our biggest trading partners. It is our major source of managerial and technical professionals. Furthermore, it is a major destination for medical and other tourism.

He identified two reasons behind Bangladesh outperforming Pakistan in RMG exports. First, 80% of RMG workers in Bangladesh are women whilst 80% in Pakistan are Men. Second, buyers were much happier to

go to Bangladesh than to Pakistan. The Gulshan Attack can change that, he opined. Doing business in third country is difficult. Orders may be placed in online but still people need to visit. Otherwise, all business would be done online already. Emerging export sectors that do not have the scale or the leverage of RMG will find it much harder to make headway. Country risk costs will increase on everything from reinsurance rates, international interest rates for Bangladesh and salary costs of required expat employees.



He informed that local businesses are suffering too. Local retail is badly hit especially the big malls due to fear factor. Restaurants and Cafes have very low traffic. Hotels have suffered massive drop in occupancy. Direct Air Cargo connectivity with Germany has already disrupted. There are chances of possible slowdown in an already struggling local real estate sector. There is possibility of increase in already high levels of illegal capital flight. Jump in re-insurance and country premium rates and loss of expatriate workers means higher costs. Climate of fear is not a good investment climate, he opined.

At the end, he provided the following recommendations:

- Developing a National Counter Terrorism Agency – supranational body under which various counter terrorism bureaus and agencies would operate
- Drafting of a National Strategy to counter violent extremists with strong emphasis on recognising and curbing early signs of radicalisation.
- Designing a “de-radicalisation” program for reintegrating the radicals back into the society, also in prisons – examples of Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Singapore.
- Developing a National Cyber Security Centre to combat extremism online
- Building a unified front by engaging and securing support of all major political parties and stakeholders in society.

Presentation-IV



Law Enforcers Perspective on Recent Trends in Extremist Violence in Bangladesh

Md. Moniruzzaman
AIG, Bangladesh Police

Md. Moniruzzaman, AIG, Bangladesh Police highlighted that the whole world, not only Bangladesh, has been at war against terrorism. In this context how much we are prepared has turned out into a significant issue and frankly speaking we are not prepared. In terms of law enforcement and combating terrorism we have limitations. He also mentioned that the people of Bangladesh have seen different version of terrorism over time. He recalled about the leftist terrorism and identified the terrorism that Bangladesh's people is seeing now as Islamist extremism. This is the recent trend. He discussed about the formation pattern of these terrorist group. They now work in small groups and have individual group leaders. They also maintain liaison between them and they have their own supply chain of arms and ammunitions. These kinds of group also include explosive experts and often work together. He shared that from 2013 onward, we have observed around 50 incidents and in these incidents victims were writers, bloggers, businessmen, religious leaders etc. There were also very unfortunate public incidences, amongst which recent attack on Holey Artisan and Sholakia Eidgah attack are very much prominent. Based on these incidents, his team developed an observation which showed that out of 184 offenders the age group below 35 is 80 per cent. From 15 to 25 of age, the percentage is 48 per cent and from 26 to 35 is 44 per cent. It means that the terrorist organisations are engaging very young people.

Regarding education, the AIG noted about the preconceived idea that most of the terrorist are from madrassa. But he said that this idea is not fully correct. From police's observation, the madrassa people's engagement in terrorism is 22 per cent and the rest 66 per cent is from the general education including the English medium education. 12 per cent of the extremists do not have any education at all. On the basis of this observation, he urged to the policy makers to think of this issue. As a government official, he confessed his limitation because he has to be bound by his duty. Thus, he urged the civil society, academia and policy makers to raise this issue and develop relevant policy suggestions to tackle this issue. From the police point of view, he shared his concern about the existing education system and he requested the authority to identify solutions in this regard. Having diverse educational system creates inconsistency in the society.

Regarding the income, he shared his experience that about 80 per cent of the offenders come from lower middle-income or lower income group or no income group whereas only 20 per cent come from upper middle class and higher income group. Regarding living area, they are from all over the country but he

informed that most of the offenders come from northern region of the country. From Dhaka it is 26 per cent, Chittagong accounts for 4 per cent, Khulna 10 per cent, Rajshahi 26 per cent and Rangpur 32 per cent. From the observation it is also evident that, most of the offenders were suffering from frustration because of their personal or family life and the recruiters always look for these type of vulnerable people. Most of the offenders did not have any criminal report before their first-time attack. It proves that they are not criminal in nature but suddenly they became criminal in which, situation is very much responsible for that. These are some of the challenges faced by the police force. Even their neighbours, they do not recognise them. This poses serious challenges for the police to locate and identify the extremists. He also shared the latest trend of terror attacks in which the terrorists are highly motivated and eager to die. They thought that if they die then after that they will directly go to Jannah (Heaven). They may be big or small, but the number does not matter as they are very dedicated. They do not have support of the community but they believe that they have the support and in the next ten years, the Khilafat will be established not only in Bangladesh and in next 15 years, it will be established all over the world. The whole world will be under the umbrella of IS (Islamic State). And they are very confident. We should not underestimate them. We are in a war and this might continue for the next few years. We have to overcome our limitations. We should not underestimate our enemy no matter how big they are or small.

He also discussed about the way out. He noted the main challenge is terrorism or extremism related intelligence. For criminal activities, we know who are the criminals and we also gathered good intelligence regarding them. But as far as the extremists and intelligence regarding the extremists are concerned, our law enforcing agencies lacks in this regard. We need to work together and combine our strengths to fight this menace.



Open Discussion



Ambassador Shamsheer M. Chowdhury, BB emphasised on the importance of women empowerment in countering radicalisation. He also emphasised on developing a workable and durable counter-narrative to challenge extremism and radicalisation.

Commodore M A Razzak, ndc, psc, BN, Director, Research and Development Bureau, DGFI mentioned about the statistical part related to extremism in Bangladesh. In giving the data he said that during the period of 1999-2013, among the total arrested militants,

79 per cent were from mainstream education, 13 per cent from Alia Madrasa, 5 per cent from Qawmi Madrasa and 3 per cent were illiterate. He also informed that among the arrested militants of Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) during that period, 90 per cent were from middle class families; among the arrested members of Huji, 68 per cent were from middle class families; among the JMB members, 0.5 per cent rich, 5 per cent higher middle class, 43 per cent middle class and 52 per cent were poor. He said that in overall of the total arrested militants, 17 per cent were from higher middle class, 53 per cent from middle class and 24 per cent from poor family backgrounds. He told that there was an assumption that the militants are basically from



poor family backgrounds but the perception started to change during 2014-2015.



Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain, OSP, ndc, psc, GD (P), Senior Directing Staff (Air), National Defence College, Dhaka suggested that in order to address the problem of radicalisation sometimes it is recommended to stop the activities of some English Medium schools, but it will not solve the problem rather it will create another problem in the society. In this regard he said that

love for mother language and nationalism is good but too much of nationalism can be a barrier to civilisation as well as a threat to national security.

In this regard **Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc (Retd)**, Treasurer, University of Asia Pacific said that the country should have a uniform education system because there exists



a far difference between the education system of English medium schools and Madrasas which creates some problems in shaping the mindsets of the students. For this reason, he suggested to find a middle ground to solve the problem and mentioned that Bangladesh should learn from the education system of different countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq where a common education system is compulsory for all students up to the 12th grade.



Ambassador Dr. M. Afsarul Qader talked about the perspective of law enforcement agencies. He wanted to see the problem not only in thinking about the criminal but also the societal perspective at large.

In his response **Md. Moniruzzaman**, AIG, Bangladesh police cleared the perspective of law enforcement agencies. He said that through media and other communication medium they were suggesting the house owners to know the information of their tenants since the terrorists were renting the houses by disguising themselves as students. He added that Dhaka Metropolitan Police has created a form and requested cooperation of the people. It is expected that the common people will cooperate with the law enforcement

agencies to tackle the situation.



Major Amin Patwary (Retd), Former UN International Staff said that we can provide a guideline during the 'khutba' but should not police on them. He also added that some of the preachers are misinterpreting the religious issues. He suggested restricting the usage of "Facebook" among the youths.

In response, **Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur** said that restricted usage of "facebook" cannot be the solution. The modern countries even cannot be successful in this regard. In the search engine "Google", daily about 60,000 searches are found on "how to join ISIS". So, we have to fight against them online.





Sumaiya Iqbal, Student, University of Dhaka suggested incorporating the youth community in the discussions as they are one of the stakeholders.

In response, **Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd)** requested BISS and MOFA to engage the young people in the dialogue as we are dealing with them.





Closing Remarks by the Chair

Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd)
Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh.

Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain, ndc, psc (Retd), Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh in his remarks stated that Counter Narrative (CN) implies responding and reacting to terror narratives. However, only focusing on counter narratives is insufficient; terrorist has the upper hand and that only reacting is doing too little. Therefore, so-called counter-narrative efforts should focus more on creating proactive, positive and alternative narratives. Strategic counter-narratives may be for governments or large, multi-lateral organisations wishing to condemn violent extremists and their efforts. Point to be noted that while strategic counter-narratives are often a necessary response to a crisis or an attack, these narratives are not necessarily intended on reaching the individuals that are already in the terror outfit or in similar organisations, but are instead targeted at the undecided fence-sitters. Religious counter-narratives may be useful if the messenger has religious authority in the target community. Religion based counter narrative should include islamic scholars, imams and community-based religious leaders but should also include NGOs which would have more effect than government-backed religious authority.

He stated that CN campaigns focus on the terrorist message and try to discredit it in the hopes of dissuading individuals from being drawn to violence. Terrorists are increasingly proficient at spreading their messages primarily online. Governments and civil society must be equally proficient and prolific in their counter-messaging to reach the same “at-risk” individuals. These counter-messages often take the form of arguments against violence, exposés of terrorist groups’ hypocrisy or ridicule of terrorist narratives. He identified the reasons for radicalisation as: suffering from vicarious deprivation, search for a sense of belongingness, adventurism and revolutionary zeal. Terrorist groups are adept at tapping into persons with these desires. Counter-recruitment or narrative efforts must understand what lures individuals to violence. It is not one size fits all, reasons of motivation varies from country to country. The internet has become a tool for radicalisation, he opined. It creates more opportunities to become radicalised. It acts as an ‘echo chamber’, tending to confirm existing beliefs. It not only facilitates radicalisation but also accelerates the process. It does not substitute but complements physical meetings.

A common narrative of the religious terror group is that we are living in imperfect world. They argue that democracy has no place in religion. Islamic world and its values are under threat by infidels and collaborators. Therefore, it is obligatory to defend Islamic world from contamination. The threat to the religion has reached a critical point or crisis and violence is the only way to overcome the threat. Furthermore, they believe fighters of the religion will receive a heavenly reward for doing so.

He provided the following recommendations:

- Establishing research cell in various institutions with input from local and outside experts

- Establishing 'National Security Council'
- Creating apex body to coordinate 'Intelligence' work
- Operational coordination between forces in a crisis situation including training and understanding of handling 'internet generation' terrorism
- Transparency in handling such sensitive issue by all concerned
- Seeking assistance from abroad limited to training and exchange of intelligence
- Utilising non-partisan more acceptable religious and social personalities in preparing CN

In conclusion, he opined that the governments should play a central role, a whole-of-community approach which should include government apparatus, political forces, civil society, commercial, and other actors. Counter-messaging is most effective when various actors are incorporated into a broader strategy, and governments alone have the resources, capabilities, and connections to manage these multiple lines of effort. Government may also take backstage promoting and supporting other forces of all shades to come together and contribute in coordinated counter narrative which would be more effective.



Closing Session

The Closing Session was chaired by **Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque**, Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh. **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS presented the summary of the seminar in this session. Afterward, the Chief Guest of the Closing Session **Mr. H.T. Imam**, Political Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh delivered his valuable remarks. At the end, **Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque**, Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh delivered his closing remarks.



Address by the Chief Guest



Mr. H. T. Imam

Political Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Mr. H. T. Imam, Political Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister thanked all participants and speakers for their thought provoking contribution in the seminar. He praised the concept note and agreed with most of the findings and assessment of the concept note of the seminar. He said that the root of the rise of fundamentalism was in 1971. During liberation war, there were two groups – one was the freedom fighters who took arms for fighting against the Pakistani soldiers and another one is the group who were against the independence of Bangladesh. The people who were against the independence of Bangladesh often uttered the phrase “Islam Khattre mein hein” that means “Islam is in Danger”. By saying that phrase, they tried to show their dedication to save Islam. People who were the supporters of that perspective were mainly the member of Jamat-E-Islami, Pakistan Muslim League, Nejam-E-Islam, etc., as well as those were the extremist left groups.

He also mentioned about Nakshal and Sharbohara party. He showed example from Bangladesh's history that the extreme left and the extreme rightist group always maintained a convergence at a point. He said that the enemies of Bangladesh have influence in encouraging terrorism. He mentioned about Jamat-E-Islami which has student wing named Islami Chattro Shibir. It was known before as Islami Chattro Shongho which became Al-Badar during Bangladesh's liberation war. Mr. Nijami was the leader of that group. During the liberation war, the Islamist group and the leftist group fought against Bangladesh. He noted that some of the Al-Badar members surrendered along with the Pakistan Army. He said that all the groups had been nurtured all through. He also mentioned about Jashad. He claimed that he personally did not have any idea about the formation and principles of Jashad. He claimed that the Jashad had also significant influence in rising the fundamentalist issues in Bangladesh. From 75' onwards after the assassination of Bangabandhu, he said that all of these groups joined together. After that, President Ziaur Rahman formed the idea of Bangladeshi nationalism by forming Bangladesh Nationalist Party. He claimed that the distorted groups who were looking for leadership got it in BNP and the Ziaur Rahman was looking for a platform. He claimed that the alliance was an odd friendship. From 1975 to 1990, he said that there were series of development of this group. From 1990 to 1996, democracy was restored after the peoples' upsurge. BNP government took over the

power that time. In 1996, again there was a big change because Awami league came to power. During Awami league government's tenure, he recalled about several notable peace accords which had greater influence in national development. In 2001, again BNP came to power. He shared that during BNP government, political issues and the economic issues experienced deterioration. That time, we have witnessed the rise of the federal government known as Haowa Bhaban which was run by the son of Begum Khaleda Zia. Under his leadership, the jamat-e-islami and other like-minded parties joined together. During that time, people saw the first rise of JMB, Bangla Bhai, Harkat-ul Jihad and many other forms of islamist militancy. There were at least half a dozen militant groups who were basically state-sponsored. During that time, the political killings were also occurred at large scale. The assassination of Ahsanullah Master was the notable one among the political killings. The 21st August attack against Sheikh Hasina was also notable. During that time, as many as ninety attacks were recorded. He said that the BNP government gave direct support to those terrorist groups to grow. He finally, said that the present Awami League government is very much strict about terrorism. He therefore, urged that the exchange of information and working together on this evil deed would help all of us to root out extreme violence.



Closing Remarks by the Chair



Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque

Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh said that there is a growing realisation that people are living now in a different world. This is a radically transformative world. However, the attack in July 2016 at Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan was unexpected in the path of gradual socio-economic development of Bangladesh. This is not a national phenomenon of the country rather it is a global phenomenon.

There is a perception that every society goes through a difficult period. Bangladesh is also going through a difficult and challenging period at the moment. Now the question is how to transform a difficult period/challenging period into a potentially beneficial future.

However, the recent extremist violence is a security issue. A good number of participants of the security sector area are also present here. Though certainly it is a security issue but it is not possible to address the issue by only securitising the phenomena. There are decade long attempts in many countries of the world to address this issue through purely security apparatus and that have been failed terribly. Bangladesh has to learn from those countries of the world.

Now the question is how to address such an issue without securitising it but at the end securing the people. As a result this is a challenging job. Bangladesh can do it by putting the whole thing into a bigger developmental and societal context.

Summary of Policy Suggestions and Recommendations

Noteworthy and constructive suggestions and recommendations have been put forward by the speakers, session chairs, esteemed guests and distinguished participants. Some of the recommendations call for immediate implementation and others need concrete strategy and long term planning to materialise. Reproduced below is a brief summary of some of these suggestions and recommendations.

Education System Reform

- Emphasis has been given to address the problems of existing education system. Suggestions have been made to revise education curriculum to highlight the appropriate national identity.
- It has been suggested that national anthem in school assembly should be made compulsory in all educational institutions (up to ten years); national days should be observed to inculcate patriotism; activities such as – Scouts, Guides, BNCC and other youth organisations should be encouraged; vocational education should be further emphasised and mainstreamed. Suggestion has also been made for creating better employment opportunities for young people.
- Recommendations have been made to introduce uniform educational system up to 12th grade; bring Qawmi Madrassa and the English Medium schools in line with the mainstream education and national curriculum; strict supervision of text books to promote democracy, rule of law, communal harmony and reject extremism of all sorts; revise syllabus of higher studies to ensure that all students must study some core liberal arts subjects including history of Bangladesh, Bengali culture and citizenship studies in all educational, technical and professional courses.
- Suggestion has been put forward for education reform. Emphasis has been given to provide appropriate religious and moral education. Recommendations have been made that religious teaching in family and school should not be confined to some rituals but must also focus on teaching the core values and underlying philosophy of their respective religions to every kid by appropriate teachers, guided by appropriate text books; government should promote all sorts of cultural activities, debate clubs, self-help works in every school; academic activities of schools should not be geared to 'private coaching'.
- Life stories of role models need to be incorporated in the school curriculum so that children can follow their good examples. Speeches of suitable powerful and influential orators should be arranged in the schools regularly.

Responsibility of Family

- Recommendations have been made to encourage close familial bondages; avoid family quarrel; lead an ethical life; prevent loneliness and depression in children and adolescent; maintain close ties with their schools, colleges and universities; allow the children to grow up as confident and matured persons; ensure their effective community engagement.
- It has also been suggested that relations among family members should be based on mutual respect; children, adolescents and youths should feel valued in their family; their questions, ideas, curiosity should be listened to attentively; their taste, questions, friends should not be ridiculed anyway. Adequate entertainment

should be ensured in the family which should not be confined to isolated entertainment.

- The enormous physical and mental energy of the children and youths should be recognised and properly channelised. Cultural activities, books, outdoor games and other extracurricular activities should be encouraged. Aggressive video games and reckless driving should be discouraged.
- Children's interaction with others in virtual media should be supervised but in a respectful way.
- It was also suggested that while encouraging the children to take greater interest in traditional values, culture and sports, they should also be positively engaged in their favourite grounds on the virtual world, internet and social media.

Involvement of Religious Scholars and Institutions

- It has been suggested that mosques should not be used to spread hatred.
- Funding of mosques, its expenditure and staffing need to be monitored.
- Khutba and Waaz Mahfil should be monitored.
- Appropriately constructed FATWA (religious counter narrative) against militancy should be prepared and widely circulated. It is very important to oppose terrorists' ideology through counter narratives and active involvement of respected clerics (acceptable non-partisan), religious scholars is imperative in this regard.

Awareness Building

- Speakers and participants stressed the importance of raising public awareness through mass media. Media should be particularly responsible and should have a common policy on how they are portraying the news of terrorism. Care should be taken by the media to avoid saying or showing things that could be used by the terrorists.
- There is a need to educate people about the various elements and aspects of government's 'zero tolerance policy' to combat terrorism and extremism.
- It has been suggested that in addition to the robust law enforcement efforts, new legislation, educational and societal reforms, all efforts to counter terrorism need to be gelled into a comprehensive and holistic campaign involving all stakeholders – government, law enforcement agencies, civil society, non-governmental organisations, politicians, academicians, businessmen, diplomats, religious and other opinion leaders, civil servants – and transformed into a social movement.
- In addition to the religious counter narrative, an all-inclusive social counter narrative carrying all important aspects need to be worked out involving all the above stakeholders and widely circulated.
- Some speakers emphasised that the counter narratives should be owned by the people not by the government.
- Some speakers also emphasised the involvement of youths in preparing counter narratives against terrorism.

Formation of Various National and Other Institutions to Counter Terrorism and Radicalisation

- Suggestion has been made to establish a centre for training of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to counter terrorism and radicalisation.
- Formation of an IT cell for virtual warfare.
- Suggestions have also been made to form a National Research Team on violent extremism with input

from local and outside experts, National and Local Support (counselling) Centres, Religious Education Cell, National Cyber Security Centre, National Security Council etc.

- It has been suggested that Bangladesh should develop a National Counter Terrorism Agency – a supranational body – under which various counter terrorism bureaus and agencies would operate.
- Recommendation has been made to create an apex body to coordinate 'Intelligence' work. Operational coordination between forces in a crisis situation including training and understanding of handling 'internet generation' terrorism should also be ensured.
- Special importance was attached on plugging holes in the intelligence establishments to avoid recurrence of serious intelligence failures.

Women Empowerment/Education

- Emphasis has been given on women empowerment.
- They should be provided with proper education, particularly, adult education for women with special emphasis on appropriate religious education.

Formulation of Plans, Programmes and Strategies

- Strengthen public relations strategy of the various relevant government Departments.
- Draft a National Strategy to counter violent extremism with strong emphasis on recognising and curbing early signs of radicalisation. It is very important to design a "deradicalisation" program for those already radicalised including those in custody.
- Balancing tactical and strategic approaches.
- Improving professionalism among the law enforcing agencies and depoliticising them.
- Further strengthening Police Counter Terrorism Unit and place more resources at the disposal of the police and other law enforcing agencies.
- Promoting the profession of "educational and counselling psychologist" and making appropriate use of their services.

International Cooperation

- Given the nexus between domestic and international terrorism and the possible adverse effects of extremist violence in Bangladesh on our relations with other countries, foreign trade and foreign investment, recommendations have been made to use country's own knowledge, experience and judicious consideration of objective situation on the ground to effectively counter violent extremism.
- At the same time the need to further expand existing and appropriate cooperation with foreign friends and partners abroad, particularly in sharing information, experience, technology and training has been emphasised.

Political Reform

- Emphasis has been given on suitable political reforms.
- Suggestions have been made to restrict use of religion in politics.
- Emphasis has also been given on more unified political commitment to counter terrorism and extremism. It has been suggested that politicians should form a political consensus based on core values of our war of liberation, promoting Bengali nationalism, democracy, social justice, secularism and good governance.

- Initiatives need to be taken to form unified front by engaging and securing support of all stakeholders including law-enforcing agencies, other governmental institutions, politicians, academics, business, banks and financial institutions, social activists, religious and other opinion leaders, educational institutions, families - in society to counter terrorism and extremism.
- Speakers have emphasised on the need for avoiding premature finger pointing – blame game.
- Some speakers also emphasised the need for expanding the political space.

Others

- Emphasis has been given to reverse the process of inequalities in the society.
- There should be transparency in handling terrorism related activities by all concerned.
- Promote the culture of affinity and tolerance.
- Organise regular dialogue sessions for ensuring interaction among local people and experts from different fields to help broaden the horizon of our tolerance.
- Create a friendly relationship between the police and general citizens to elicit active support in counter terrorist operations.
- Bangladeshi over-stayers abroad and foreign over-stayers in Bangladesh need to be monitored carefully.
- One of the speakers suggested that in order to mitigate the adverse effects of the recent extremist violence in Bangladesh targeting foreigners, on our exports and foreign investment, we have to ensure that such incidents do not recur, if possible. Alternatively adequate, credible and visible measures should be put in place to restore the confidence of our foreign partners.
- Speakers also emphasised to address the following disconnects –
 - Politicians and the civil society
 - Parents and the children
 - Religious and progressive forces (secular)
 - Business and intellectuals

It should be kept in mind that counter terrorism is not only the responsibility of law enforcement agencies, especially police forces. Rather it is the responsibility of everyone in the society. People from all walks of life should come forward and contribute to the effort. We need to remain prepared for the long haul in our counter terrorism efforts.

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