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Rise of terrorism blamed on denial of political space

Staff correspondent

Denial of political space in a large society is conducive to the growth of extremist and terrorist groups in the country, warned Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies president ANM Muniruzzaman on Sunday.

The aspects of politicising religion in Bangladesh is alarming, the head of the think-tank organisation said stressing the need for strengthening the measures to contain activities of the extremist and terrorist groups and terror financing.

Muniruzzaman, a retired major general of Bangladesh Army, was speaking at the launching of the Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research, a specialised wing of the BIPSS formed with the goal of reducing the threat of terrorism and minimising its impact on society, in Dhaka.

He said the government should take appropriate measures on a regular basis as the terrorist groups were improving their way of actions.

Asked about the activities of Hurkatul Jihad Bangladesh, he said the government was aware of the activities of the outfit at the operational level.

Rohan Gunaratna, head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research of S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, also addressed the function.

All the terrorist activities in Bangladesh indicate that only about one per cent of the population support such activities, he said.

A non-government think-tank organisation like BCTR is very much necessary to portray this and ensure that the world does not get a wrong picture, he pointed out.

He said Bangladesh faces the threat of extremism and terrorism and if partners, including non-governmental institutions and media, do not act with the government, the situation was likely to escalate like it had been in the case of Pakistan and some other countries.

An organisation like the BCTR will be able study the goals, tactics, resources and strategies of terrorists, analyse terrorist threats and risks and develop responses to it, the expert said.

The BIPSS sources said the terrorism research centre would also work for developing counter-ideological tools and finding ways of using them in various fields to tackle the rise of radicalism and terrorism in Bangladesh.

They said the prevailing threats and possibilities of the rise of terrorism and extremism in the country had compelled the BIPSS to establish this specialised centre on terrorism.

The centre is a collaborative effort between specialised terrorism research centres in South-East Asia, Europe and the BIPSS.