

THE STRAITS TIMES

Print Article

>> [Back to the article](#)

June 10, 2007

Inter-community ties not affected by latest detention

Racial, religious groups have kept social glue strong, say community leaders

By Keith Lin

TIES among the various communities in Singapore will not be hampered by the detention of a self-radicalised young Muslim law graduate, community leaders yesterday said.

This, according to Ustaz Mohamed Ali, a counsellor for the Religious Rehabilitation Group, was because the various racial and religious groups have worked hard to strengthen ties since two waves of Jemaah Islamiah (JI) arrests in 2001 and 2002.

Then, 31 men were detained for being part of a plot to bomb several embassies, water pipelines and United States naval vessels and personnel here.

'The JI episode taught us all a great deal in terms of the importance of forging inter- community ties,' he said.

Community leaders interviewed also pointed out that the Abdul Basheer case was an isolated incident; he was an individual who had gone astray.

As Mr Chua Thian Poh, president of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, put it: 'There are bound to be one or two black sheep in every ethnic group. You can't take them to represent the entire community.'

Still, community leaders were unanimous in saying that the threat of 'self-radicalised' individuals should not be dismissed.

Mr Ridzuan Wu, chairman of the Centre for Islamic Contemporary Studies, said its emergence had caught many by surprise.

'The focus has always been institutions such as madrasahs (religious schools), but now with individuals having access to all sorts of information on the Internet, scrutinising certain organisations is no longer adequate,' he said.

Greater education, it seems, is the key to weeding out such radical views.

Ustaz Mohammed Suhaimi Mohamed Fauzi, executive imam at the Al-Istighfar Mosque in Pasir Ris, urged those with a keen interest in Islam to consult religious teachers and scholars to get the right view of Islam. An imam is the leader of a prayer in mosques.

They should not be relying on the Internet for information.

He cautioned that 'if people just take the Internet to be their teachers, it could lead them to a dangerous zone' because not everything on the Net is accurate or true.

Ustaz Mohamed Ali said religious leaders should also be more pro-active in developing ways to counter the deviant teachings lurking in cyberspace.

He suggested that scholars publish their writings to educate Muslims about Islam and guard against 'radical ideology'.

Parents and adults also have a role to play in educating and supervising young people, said Mr Imram Mohamad, the chairman of Malay- Muslim self-help group AMP Singapore.

'They must equip their young children with a basic grounding in religious education, so that they won't be misled or manipulated by extremist ideology when they grow up,' he said.

klin@sph.com.sg

'This issue of self-radicalisation is one of the greatest challenges the Muslim community is facing...We need to work hard continuously and highlight to our community that this is a real problem, not something we can put aside.'

USTAZ MOHAMED ALI, a counsellor for the Religious Rehabilitation Group

'We have to make sure that...we provide as much support as possible for people looking for spiritual guidance in life. We want them to go to the proper sources and accredited religious leaders...'

DEFENCE MINISTER TEO CHEE HEAN, speaking to reporters at a community event yesterday

'This is not just an issue of a certain community... In all ethnic groups, there are bound to be one or two black sheep...All of us should now work together to develop trust between each other.'

MR CHUA THIAN POH, president of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Copyright © 2007 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved. [Privacy Statement & Condition of Access](#)