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June 9, 2007

'Self-radicalised' law grad, 4 JI militants held

Lecturer learnt extremist ideology online; new phenomenon troubling: MHA

By Sue-Ann Chia

A YOUNG Muslim Singaporean law graduate has been detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for planning militant activities, after being influenced by radical ideas online.

He is part of what the Home Affairs Ministry yesterday described as a troubling new phenomenon of individuals who are 'self-radicalised' and not directly recruited by established terrorist groups.

Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader, 28, earned his law degree from the National University of Singapore. He practised law at a top firm here and later became a polytechnic lecturer.

His militant views were shaped by the Internet and last year, he left for a Middle East country to learn Arabic for communicating with 'mujahidin' fighters.

Very soon, the extremist propaganda on the Net so influenced him that he bought a plane ticket to Pakistan, where he planned to get training for a militant jihad or holy war and to go into Afghanistan and join the Taleban.

His plans were thwarted when he was arrested and detained in February this year.

In revealing his detention, the ministry also disclosed that four more Jemaah Islamiah (JI) members were nabbed recently. A fifth member had a restriction order, which requires him to get approval before changing jobs or going abroad. All five had been on the run since 2001.

But the most stunning piece of news to community leaders last night was the detention of 'self-radicalised' or DIY radical Abdul Basheer. A bright student, he studied at Raffles Institution and National Junior College, said sources.

The ministry said he began developing, from late 2004, 'the mindset that he had to wage militant jihad in a land where Muslims were under attack'.

'His views were shaped by the radical discourse that he avidly looked up on the Internet,' it added.

Last October, he left Singapore for a Middle East country, where he planned to live for two years to learn Arabic.

But in two months, he became so fired up by extremist propaganda on the Net that he decided to escalate his militant jihad plans immediately.

When arrested, he had bought the plane ticket to Pakistan, where he intended to contact a militant group - the Lashkar e-Tayyiba - that could help him train for the militant jihad and to cross over into Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taleban.

To facilitate his plans, he got help from a Singaporean friend, Muhamad Yassin Khan Muhamad Yunos, 30, who was issued with a restriction order in February.

'He was not only fully aware of Abdul Basheer's plans to wage militant jihad in Afghanistan, but had actively abetted it,' said the ministry.

He had also encouraged Abdul Basheer's jihad aspirations by suggesting how to get more funds for his activities.

The Internal Security Department has, in recent years, investigated a few Singaporeans drawn to terrorist and radical ideas in the mass media, particularly the Internet.

Community leaders and MPs interviewed were troubled by the phenomenon. Said Hong Kah GRC MP Zaqq Mohamad: 'This shows we are a lot more vulnerable than we thought, and the role of the new media is quite apparent.'

But they are confident community ties, which have strengthened since the first wave of terrorism-related arrests in 2001, will not be strained by this development. They are also not alarmed as it shows the vigilance of security agencies here.

There are now 34 people detained under the ISA for terrorism activities.

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