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Trend of terrorism, extremism high under undemocratic govt

Say counter-terrorism experts

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Leading counter-terrorism experts yesterday said the trend of rising terrorism and extremism is high during an undemocratic government system as people cannot express their opinion and political parties cannot get involved with them.

"As people cannot express their views and political parties cannot get involved with them in an undemocratic government system, the terrorist groups can expand their network very quickly," said Dr Rohan Gunaratna, a Singapore-based international counter-terrorism expert, at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

Dr Rohan, head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at S Rajaratnam School of International Studies under Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said due to undemocratic government system terrorist activities rose in Pakistan and similar situation may prevail in Bangladesh in a alarming way.

"Lack of political activities is conducive to uprising radical group in a large society like Bangladesh," said Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman, president of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) that organised the press conference on the eve of launching specialised Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR).

Dr Rohan said different terrorist outfits in Bangladesh including the Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HuJI) Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are potential threats to national security.

He called upon the government as well as the private sectors including the news media and business community to join their hands to tackle terrorism.

He said educational institutions and religious clerics could play a vibrant role in tackling extremism in Bangladesh where around 99 percent people are moderate and do not support terrorism.



Dr Rohan Gunaratna addresses a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman and Jolene Anne Jerard. Photo: STAR

Over the setting up of the centre, Muniruzzaman said prevailing threats and possibilities of the rise of terrorism and extremism have compelled the country to establish the specialised research centre in collaboration with such institutions in the US, Europe and Asia.

The centre will work for developing counter-terrorism tools and finding ways of implementing those tools to tackle the rise of radicalism and terrorism in the country, he said in a paper.

Muniruzzaman said they will hold a three-day workshop with international experts on terrorists' financing and money laundering in the coming days.

Jolene Jerard, research analyst of the ICPVTR, was present at the press conference.

Earlier at a lecture on the 'Trend of terrorism in South Asia' organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its auditorium in the capital, Dr Rohan lauded Bangladesh's efforts in fighting the JMB.

He said as 99 percent people of Bangladesh are moderate the support base of the extremist groups here is very small.

He observed that the security issue of Bangladesh is not only important for its own people, but also for the region and international community because of its geographical position inbetween China and India- the emerging global powers in the days to come.

"The extremist groups who claim working for Islam actually do not represent Islam. They even do not have true knowledge on Islam," he said, adding that the perception that the US fight is against Islam is not right.

Presiding over the session following the lecture, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University said it is not a matter of much worry what US lists, rather listing should be done by authorities of the country and the region.

BEI Project Coordinator M Shafiullah and Islamic thinker Abul Kalam Azad also spoke at the programme.