BANGLADESH: COUNTERING TERRORISM AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
Bangladesh has enacted a number of laws for preventing financing of terrorism and violent extremism, including the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012 and the Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012. Banks have been equipped regarding the procedure for handling money laundering and terrorism financing matters. In July 2013, Bangladesh secured membership of Egmont Group and became a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering. In February 2014, owing to Bangladesh’s successes, the Financial Action Task Force (an inter-state organization comprising 34 developed countries and two regional organizations) removed Bangladesh’s name from their “grey list”.

In today’s world, national and global security face their most toughest challenge from the twin menaces of terrorism and violent extremism. In recent years, Bangladesh too has been subjected to increased threats from terrorists and violent extremists. As a responsible and active member of the global community, and under the determined leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been taking the fight to terrorists and violent extremists. In this booklet, we will be looking at the efforts and successes of Bangladesh in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism and the role the country is playing in terms of maintaining global peace and security.

**LAWS AND STRATEGY**

In 2009, Bangladesh enacted for the first time, specific legislation designed to combat terrorism: the Anti Terrorism Act 2009. To bring this anti terror legislation in line with the UN’s Action Plan on Counter Terrorism Strategy and other resolutions, it has been amended twice subsequently. The broad language of the legislation provides several mechanisms by which Bangladesh can implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which requires nations to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat. In 2011, the government formulated the “National Counter Terrorism Strategy”. In August 2011, Bangladesh acceded to the Palermo Convention Against Transnational Organised Crimes.

**TACKLING TERRORISM FINANCING**

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Bangladesh has fared much better than many South Asian countries in the 2016 anti-money laundering or terrorist financing index published in the first week of August. The Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index, published by the Switzerland-based Basel Institute on Governance (Basel Institute), ranked Bangladesh 54th in the world with a score of 6.4. In South Asia, only India is in a better position than Bangladesh with a score of 5.69.
In 2010, the government formulated a strong anti militancy National Education Policy, which highlights the need for reforming the Madrassa curriculum. The government also introduced anti extremism chapters in academic text books. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has been organizing awareness programs against terrorism in different schools and colleges. The government is developing a standard national curriculum that includes language, math, and science; and minimum standards of secular subjects to be taught in all primary schools, up to the eighth grade, in order to make sure that students of all mediums receive the appropriate type of education.

On 1 August, 2016, more than 100,000 college and university students in Bangladesh joined hands to form human chains to protest terrorism and violent extremism.

#BANGLADESHSTRONG

**EDUCATION AGAINST TERRORISM**

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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEES
To better coordinate efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism, the government in 2009 formed a 17-member “National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention”, headed by the Minister for Home Affairs and comprising of representation from relevant ministries and security agencies. By the same token, the government also formed an eight-member “National Committee for Intelligence Coordination,” with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, to coordinate between law enforcement and intelligence services as regards terrorism and violent extremism.

BANNING EXTREMIST GROUPS
Since 2009, the government has banned five extremist outfits, namely, Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI-B), Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), Shahadat-e-Al Hikma and Ansarullah Bangladesh Team (ABT). Apart from these known local groups, all terrorist groups designated as such by the UN Security Council Committee have also been banned.

COUNTER TERRORISM UNIT
In December 2015, Bangladesh formed a 600-member police unit specializing in combating terrorism and violent extremism. The “Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime” unit has been formed to combat terrorism, cyber crimes, terrorism financing and mobile banking related crimes. The unit, led by a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, has been formed with members from Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), bomb disposal unit, and the dog squad. The unit collects information and data on terrorists and transnational criminals at home and abroad, monitors their activities, and arrests them.
Apart from the legal and institutional arrangements, the government has also integrated educational institutions, civil society, NGOs and media in strengthening the campaign against terrorism and militancy. To counter the messages of hate, the current government has also engaged civil society sections, cultural organizations and social activists to raise public awareness about the dangers of radicalization, extremism and militancy. The government’s National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention is working with Imams and religious scholars to build public awareness against terrorism.

Anti-terrorism sermons are being delivered in mosques across the country since 1 July, 2016. Headed by Bangladesh Awami League, committees have been formed in every district to spearhead the social movement against terrorism and violent extremism. In 2014, Bangladesh became a board member and pilot country for the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience (GCERF), a public-private global fund to support local, grassroots efforts to counter violent extremism. Recently, programmes under the GCERF have been rolled out in three districts: Satkhira, Cox’s Bazar and Chapainawabganj.

#BangladeshAgainstTerrorism: Since 15 July, 2016, Imams of mosques across the country have been delivering “Khutba” (sermon) before and after Friday prayers highlighting the directives of the Holy Quran and Hadith against militancy and terrorism.
DHAKA ATTACK AFTERMATH

Operation Thunderbolt: On 1 July, 2016, Bangladesh suffered a major terrorist attack in Gulshan, Dhaka. In a special raid called “Operation Thunderbolt”, all 5 armed terrorists were killed by the law enforcement officials.

Operation Storm 26: On 26 July, 2016, a special police drive termed ‘Operation Storm-26’ was conducted in a suspected terrorist hideout in Dhaka’s Kallyanpur area, where 9 terrorists were killed and 2 detained as the police officers came under fire from the terrorists.

Operation Hit Strong 27: On 27 August, 2016, a special counter terrorism raid termed “Operation Hit Strong 27” was conducted at a hideout in Paikpara, Narayanganj which saw 3 terrorists, including the mastermind of the Gulshan attack Tamim Chowdhury, killed by the law enforcement agents, who themselves came under attack.

Arrests and Prosecution

Arrests: Between July and August 2016, the government has stepped up efforts to apprehend those who are involved in terrorism and violent extremism. 293 suspected terrorists have been arrested from various parts of the country belonging to such banned terror outfits as the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkat-Ul-Jihad (HuJi), Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and Hizbut Tahrir.

Charges Brought: For the killing of seculars, bloggers and religious minorities, charges have been brought against 52 alleged members of such banned terror outfits as Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), in 6 different cases. Previously 12 similar cases have been filed in which charge-sheets have been submitted against the accused.

Enhanced Measures: Since July 1, existing preventive and counter measures have been scaled up and strengthened, including:

- Tightening bail conditions for those alleged to have committed terrorist acts
- Increased monitoring of educational institutions to prevent radicalization
- Monitoring of religious speeches by Imams to identify and prevent hate speech
- Encouraging anti-extremism sermons to be delivered in mosques on Fridays