

BANGLADESH PEACE and SECURITY



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Introduction

In recent years Bangladesh's commitment to combating extremism and terrorism has received glowing appraisal at both home and abroad. In particular, since the current Awami League government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009, Bangladesh ceased being a safe haven for national and transnational terrorists, a notoriety the country garnered during the first years of the 2000s. Bangladesh has also been leading the global efforts to maintain peace and security in conflict-ridden parts of the world by being one of the highest contributor of troops to various United Nations Peacekeeping missions.

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 and zero-tolerance policy of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been taking the fight to terrorists and violent extremists.

In this publication, 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.

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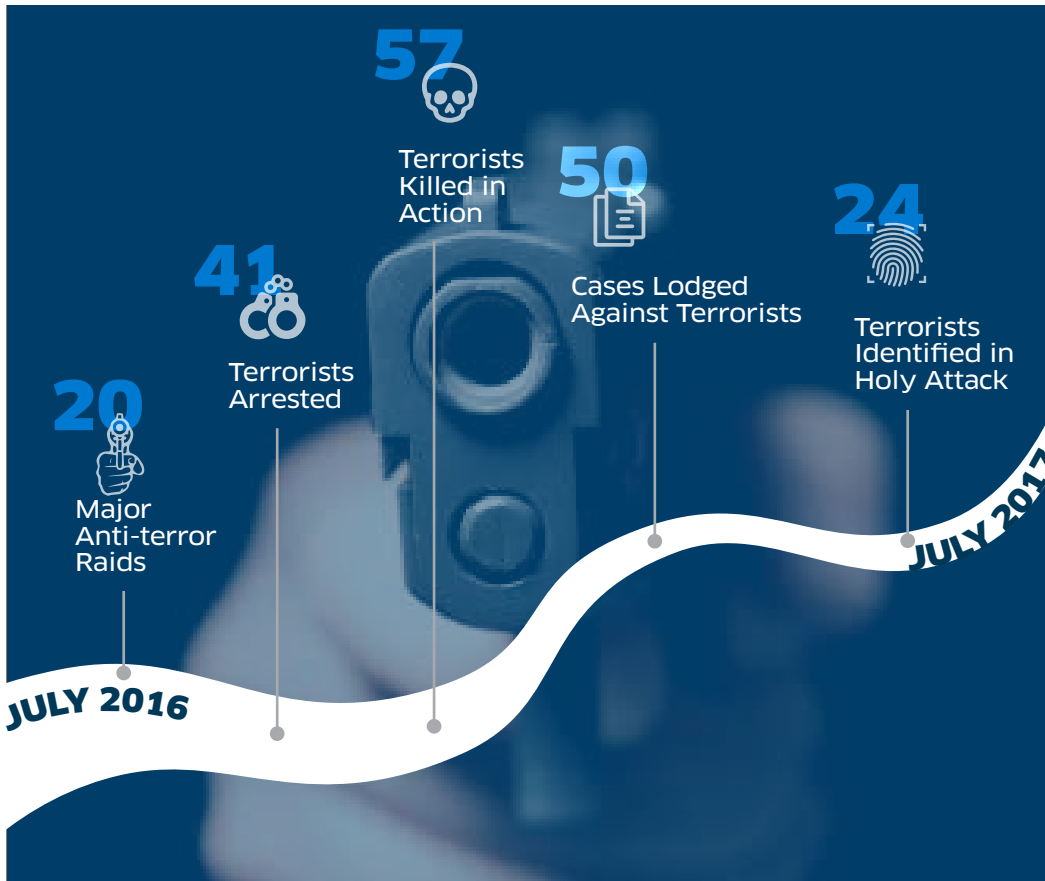
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1. One Year Since Holy Artisan: **BANGLADESH FOUGHT BACK STRONGLY**

THE terrorist attack on 1 July, 2016 at a cafe in Dhaka named 'Holy Artisan' was a blow to the collective conscience of the nation. The incident saw 20 hostages being killed by terrorists belonging to the mutated version of banned terror group Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh, the neo-JMB. While the law enforcers managed to raid and kill all 5 terrorists in the scene, that was only the beginning of the fight back against the group. Within one year, the current Government in Bangladesh launched a

massive crackdown on the group. In a span of 12 months, 20 major anti-terrorism raids were conducted across the country which resulted in the arrests of 41 terrorists belonging to neo-JMB. During these raids, as law enforcers faced off with armed terrorists, 57 such terrorists were killed in gunfights. 11 valiant law enforcement officers, at the apex of the fight against terrorism, gave their lives during these operations. So far, 50 cases have been lodged against the arrested terrorists under the prevalent anti terrorism and arms and explosives laws of the





July 2016-July 2017: Bangladesh Fighting Back

country. Even before the crackdown following the 1 July 2016 attack, 200 terrorists belonging to JMB and other groups were arrested, while 13 were killed in fight with law enforcers.

According to experts and analysts, the extensive crackdowns on the terrorists after the attack on Holy Artisan have broken down backbones of the armed activists. The groups have lost their organizational capacity to carry out attacks on a large scale as security officials are constantly detecting their locations and movements with intensified intelligence vigilance. The activities of JMB have been brought under strict control as the law

enforcers have successfully stopped regrouping of the neo JMB as most of their top leaders are now behind bars or killed in action.

Although the main attackers were killed in the scene itself, the people behind the scene are also being investigated and prosecuted. So far found 24 neo-JMB men involved in the Holy Artisan attack have been identified and 4 of them arrested as the investigation into the matter is now at the final stage. 14 of them have already died during the various major anti-terrorism raids. The charge sheet in the case will be submitted to the court soon. ■

2. Leading in Tackling **TERROR-FINANCING**

BANGLADESH improved 28 positions in the anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing (AML/CTF) index of the Basel Institute on Governance. The country came in at no. 82 out of 146 in the 2017 edition of the Basel AML Index, up from its previous spot of 54. A total of 14 indicators dealing with AML/CTF regulations, corruption, financial standards, political disclosure and the rule of law are aggregated into one overall risk score for the index.

The Switzerland-based institute prepares score on the basis of a scale of 0 to 10,

with 0 to 3.3 being low-risk, 3.3 to 6.6 medium-risk and 6.6 to 10 high-risk. Bangladesh's score this year was 5.79, down from its last year score of 6.40. As per the score, Bangladesh is among the 100 medium-risk countries, including India that managed a score of 5.58. In South Asia, only India ranked ahead of Bangladesh: 88. Pakistan ranked 46, Sri Lanka 25, Nepal 14, Myanmar 13 and Afghanistan 2. The report said Bangladesh saw a big jump in its ranking due to the results of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (Mutual Evaluation Report in October 2016). In fact, Bangladesh is one of the 10 countries that made the most



progress, along with China, Israel, Germany, France, Australia, Luxemburg, Latvia, Greece and Sudan.

According to the FATF report, Bangladesh has made significant progress since its last evaluation report in 2009, reflecting political commitment and leadership on AML/CTF. The positive changes were seen in developing preventive measures for the financial sector and applying significant resources to raise awareness of AML/CTF. According to the central bank of Bangladesh, the country has implemented all 40 of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering's recommendations. The country managed full

compliance in 6 categories, near full compliance in 22 and partial compliance in 12.

A positive seal of approval came also from the 19th annual general meeting of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, the regional watchdog, held on August 7, 2016 in the USA. There, Bangladesh retained its position as a country free of risk of money laundering and terror financing. The latest APG report showed Bangladesh's rating is substantial in three areas, moderate in four and low in four. Bangladesh is ahead of Sri Lanka in this ranking. The country was not found non-compliant in any of the indicators. ■

BANGLADESH IN BASEL AML INDEX 2017



1 of 10
Countries Which Made
Most Progress



40/40
Recommendations
Implemented



28
Positions Improved
in Index



3. Countering and Preventing **TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

3.1 Legal and Policy Measures

After the Awami League Government came to power 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. In the last such amendment, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2013, provi-

sions were made for the courts to accept videos, still photographs and audio clips used in social media as evidence. The amended law also provides for capital punishment and stiff financial penalties for terrorism and subversive activities, depending upon the gravity of the crimes.

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 a “National Counter Terrorism Strategy”. In August of that year, Bangladesh acceded to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes.

Reforms have also been undertaken in the area of terrorism financing. In 2012, the government enacted the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012, which is the first legislation in Bangladesh making specific provisions for money laundering and terrorism financing. The Financial Intelligence Unit of the Bangladesh Bank has taken effective steps to curb terrorism financing.

3.2 Law Enforcement

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.

3.3 International Cooperation

In 2012, Bangladesh also enacted the Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012 which provides a legal framework for inter-country cooperation in carrying

out enquiries, prosecutions and trial of criminal activities. This law empowers the government of Bangladesh to freeze properties of criminals and terrorists and their equipment used in criminal activities in line with the request of a foreign country.

In July 2013, Bangladesh secured membership of Egmont group, a global body of 131 member nations to combat money laundering, financing of terrorism and other financial crimes. Bangladesh also became a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, which is an autonomous and collaborative international organization consisting of 41 members and a number of international and regional observers.

On January 28, 2013, Bangladesh and India signed an extradition treaty for disrupting the regional connections and networks among terrorist outfits in South Asia. Additionally, Bangladesh and India has agreed to implement a Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) and has agreed to increase the number of joint patrolling with a view to curbing criminal activities, including terrorism, along the long and porous border.

On 22 October 2013, Bangladesh signed an agreement with the USA which aims to enhance counterterrorism cooperation between the two



countries in terms of capacity building, information sharing, and ensuring increased exchanges between law enforcement agencies.

Bangladesh and USA are currently undertaking multifaceted cooperation in terms of developing the former's capacity to fight terrorism, which has resulted in enhanced security of its borders and land, sea, and airports of entry. Bangladesh continues to participate with the US State Department, Department of Justice, U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific to capacitate its own personnel to apprehend, prosecute and fight terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh is party to various counterterrorism protocols under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and is bringing the country's counterterrorism efforts in line with the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. From 2016, Bangladesh is also working closely with Austria, Germany and Norway in the area of countering terrorism and violent extremism.

3.4 Social Movement

Apart from the legal and institutional arrangements, the government has also integrated the civil society, NGOs and media in strengthening the campaign against terrorism and militancy. Apart from emphasizing the role of educational institutions to provide an effective counter-narrative to messages of hate and extremism, the current government has also been engaging the civil society sections, cultural organizations and social activists to raise public awareness about the dangers of radicalization, extremism and militancy.

In 2010, the government formulated a strong anti militancy National Education Policy, which highlights the need for reforming the Madrasa Islamic religious school 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. The government's National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention is working with Imams (Islamic religious leaders) 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, 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. ■

4. Bangladesh and **PEACEKEEPING**

WITH 7,013 troops, police and military experts, Bangladesh continues to be one of the largest contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions around the world. There are multiple instances of Bangladeshi peacekeepers laying down their lives in the service of world peace. In terms of troops and police contributions, Bangladesh is currently the fourth largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

In December 2016, responding to a call from the UN, Bangladesh decided to send an infantry battalion and an engineering company of armed forces to maintain peace in war-torn South Sudan. Both the infantry battalion and engineering company have been deployed under the “United Nations Mission in South Sudan” (UNMISS).

In July last, the UN Secretary-General announced the appointment of Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of

Bangladesh Army as Force Commander of Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Major General Kabir has had a “distinguished military career, with over 32 years of wide-ranging command and staff experience”. Since 1989, he has held command positions at unit, battalion, brigade and divisional levels in the Bangladesh Army as well as senior staff appointments.

Bangladesh’s role in the UN peacekeeping missions particularly in the French-speaking countries was lauded at a ministerial meeting in Paris on 27 October, 2016. In the meeting, the UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Harvey Ladsus, “highly praised” the Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed in the Francophone missions. French and Canadian foreign ministers also praised Bangladesh’s contribution. Attending the meeting, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister reiterated Dhaka’s commitment “to remain one of the first responders to the UN’s call for troop and police”. ■

BANGLADESH IN UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS JUNE 2017



Troops
5,838



Police
1,122



Military
Experts
53



TOTAL
7,013

5. Peace and Security

UPDATES

> Surveys Show Bangladeshis Satisfied With Security Situation

All recent public opinion polls show that a majority of Bangladeshis are satisfied with the security situation in their country and the way the government has been handling all security matters.

According to a opinion poll by Washington-based Democracy International in October 2016, majority Bangladeshis are satisfied with security situation and counter terrorism efforts of the government. As per the survey, 77% Bangladeshis feel the Awami League Government is doing a good or excellent job in preventing extremist attacks. The same survey showed that 72% Bangladeshis feel that



➤ **Seven Fast Track Tribunals To Try Terrorists**

The Bangladesh Government is set to establish seven Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunals in seven divisions as fast track courts for quick disposal of cases involving terrorism and militancy. The Law Ministry has created posts of seven judges to be appointed in seven tribunals and have already obtained required approvals from the Public Administration and Finance Ministries. Initiatives are now underway to set up the first two tribunals in Dhaka and Chittagong and judges of these two fast track courts were expected to be appointed “soon” along with 10 other related officials and staff.

➤ **Bangladesh’s crackdown on terrorism a model template: Narendra Modi**

During a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the latter commented that the former’s comprehensive crackdown on terrorism is a template for other countries on how to tackle terror. During the meeting, which was held at Goa in October, 2016 at the sidelines of the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Meeting, PM Modi commended Sheikh Hasina for her strong actions to counter terrorism in Bangladesh. He added ‘Your battle against terrorism was yielding very positive results. You have shown us all a new template on how to fight terrorism so successfully’. ■





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