

Rab successful in fighting militancy, now to combat cyber crimes

Elite force boss Hassan Mahmood tells The Daily Star

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The elite force Rab is now laying emphasis on gearing up its capacity and modern training to combat any form of probable technology-based terrorist activities in Bangladesh.

Director General of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Hassan Mahmood Khandker suspects that there is possibility of cyber attacks spreading misleading messages on websites or hacking different organisations' websites.

"We must have technology-based capacity for our intelligence activities, investigations and operations," said the Rab chief in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

Now the cyber crime is a big issue, he said adding that they are trying to gear up their capacity to combat it.

The Rab achieved remarkable success in combating religious militancy that wrecked havoc in the country by perpetrating a number of deadly grenade and bomb attacks since 1999.

The elite force arrested around 580 militants of different outlawed groups including Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Huji) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in massive crackdowns following the August 17, 2005 synchronised bomb blasts in 63 districts.

The JMB which got nourished under the patronisation

of the past BNP-Jamaat-led four-party coalition government appeared as a great threat to the security due to their series of suicidal attacks. However, the outfit almost left to ruins after the arrests and executions of its six top leaders.

Hassan Mahmood said he does not think that at this moment any foreign or local militants have the capacity to conduct a massive strike. He however did not rule out the possibility of stray attacks by the militants.

"I don't say we are well equipped, but we have the capability to combat a menace. There're still many things to do. We've to make our training up-to-date and improve our capacity," he said.

The Rab boss said they are now talking about achieving three-dimensional capability. "We'll have to be comfortable and effective in our actions on land, air and water," he said, adding they will gain their strength in the air after they get two helicopters, procurement of which is under process.

"The terrorists are taking advantage of the blessing of mundane technology. At the same time, Rab should also try to attain adequate technology-based capability for its actions. And we are trying to achieve it."

During the interview, the director general also talked about the rise of foreign and homegrown militant groups, their activities, funding and strengths. He also talked about



Rab Director General Hassan Mahmood Khandker talks to The Daily Star.

ways to face the menace.

Hassan Mahmood stressed the need for regular and continued ventures by the Anti-terrorism and Militancy Committee formed at the national level and handling the issue effectively.

Asked about foreign militants now active in Bangladesh, he said the outcome of their busting on different foreign militants indicates activities of three to four foreign militant groups in the country.

However, the Rab chief could not give a rough idea about the amount of fund militants use yearly to run their activities in Bangladesh rather suggested an analysis of

strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of terrorism in the country with a view to having an idea how much fund the militants are getting.

He said though there were some instances of foreign funds for militants from both individuals and non-governmental organisations, but now the funds mainly come from personal contributions by their members.

Asked whether the inflow of foreign funds to militants has been stopped, the Rab boss did not rule out the possibility.

He however said, "We're trying to identify those who provided funds to the militants. I suspected that a trend of

foreign funding for militancy was there. There is no plausible cause to believe that foreign funds for militants have been stopped. Crime blusters will have to dig out the mystery and truth behind it."

The Rab chief said many sources of foreign funding including personal funds and some NGOs have already been detected and stopped.

He said since early 90s militancy started rising in Bangladesh centring Afghan War in which a few people participated from this part of the region. Some other realities like regional connections, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and misleading ideologies are also the factors.

The Rab DG said misinterpretation of religion also worked to radicalise sympathisers.

Hassan Mahmood said although the militancy is a global issue but in order to combat it should be looked into from regional perspective for achieving better results.

He also did not rule out the nexus between the home-grown militant elements and the foreign radicals.

About the present militant activities, the Rab chief observed that local militants are trying to enhance their organisational activities as they have become weaker probably due to the effective policing by the law enforcing and intelligence agencies and democratic political environ-

ment now prevailing.

He suggested a holistic approach as a curative measure to combat militancy alongside the preventive measures like continued intelligence on them and launching crackdown.

He also said the government has already started taking the holistic approach through the Jongi Protirodh and Protikar Committee (Committee for Resistance and Correction Militancy) in which all stakeholders have been included.

Gen Rafiqul takes over as BDR chief

BSS, Dhaka

Maj Gen Md Rafiqul Islam has taken over as the director general of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

He took over the charge from outgoing DG of the border force Maj Gen Moinul Islam on Sunday, a BDR release said yesterday.

The deputy director general, directors and high officials of BDR received the new director general on his arrival at the BDR headquarters.

Prior to his new assignment, Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam was the DG of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP.

He obtained commission in Signal Corps in Bangladesh Army on November 30 in 1976. During his career, he held many important posts successfully.

Rafiqul Islam was the GSO (operations) of Military Operations Directorate, assistant private secretary to the Chief of Army Staff, directing staff of Defence Services Command and Staff College, colonel staff of the Infantry Division, director (operation) of the Prime Minister's Office and the Armed Forces Division and director (signal) of the Army Headquarters.

He also performed as the commandant of two signal battalions and Signal Training School and College. He served as the deputy region commander of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) in 1993-94.

অনুমোদিত বেসরকারী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হস্তান্তর করতে চান?

বাংলাদেশে বিদেশী বিনিয়োগে একটি অলাভজনক বিশ্বমানের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় গড়ে তোলার সুপরিচ্ছিন্ন উদ্যোগে, অনুমোদিত বেসরকারী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হস্তান্তরে আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান নিম্নের ফোন নম্বরে অনুগ্রহপূর্বক যোগাযোগ করুন। যোগাযোগকারীর সমস্ত তথ্য গোপন রাখা হবে।

মোবা : ০১৭২৯-০৯১১৯৭



A girl looks at cartoons at a three-day exhibition of cartoons on political and social issues at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Cartoon exhibition begins

DU CORRESPONDENT

A three-day exhibition of cartoons on various political and social issues started at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

A total of 108 cartoons on different issues, including political incidents, crisis of gas, water and electricity, law and order situation, crimes by pro-government people, human rights and torture on journalists, drawn by nine cartoonists are being displayed at the exhibition.

Prof Abdus Sattar of Fine Art Faculty at Dhaka University, journalist Shafiq Rehman and other cartoonists inaugurated the exhibition, organised by the Bangladesh Cartoonists' Forum.

Among the cartoons on display, 45 were published in several national dailies on different occasions while the rest were newly drawn,

said Jubayer Mamun, a coordinator of the exhibition.

He said the exhibition will remain open for all from 10:00am to 5:00pm everyday.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Dr Abdus Sattar said, "A cartoon can describe a situation many times more than a writing containing hundreds of words."

A cartoon can describe a complicated issue very easily and so both educated and uneducated people understand it, he added.

Journalist Shafiq Rehman said cartoons on political issues have the challenge of facing both politicians and conscious readers.

The speakers stressed developing tolerance in the political arena to encourage cartoonists to draw effective cartoons on political issues.

The participating cartoonists are Huda, Tofa, Benu, Mahi, Mehedi, Hamdul, Niyon, Hasan and E' Mondal.

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