

# Authorities call on pvt univs to build resistance to extremism

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MOST extremists and militants in recent times are students of colleges and universities indicating a failure of educational institutions to guide their students in the right direction, said discussants at a meet between government authorities and private university officials on Sunday.

Lack of facilities for co-curricular activities, cultural programmes, debates, games, absence of programmes marking national days at most of the private universities are some major reasons why their students are becoming soft targets of recruiters of religious extremism, they observed.

Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, education minister Nurul Islam Nahid and top police officials at the programme warned educational institutions responsible for driving students toward religious extremism would face consequences.

The home ministry, with cooperation from the education ministry, arranged the programme with authorities, senior teachers, students and owners of the private universities at Krishibid Institution Auditorium in the capital as part of its campaign against religious extremism.

The programme comes in the wake of recent extremist attacks on a Gulshan café in the capital and a police-checkpoint near the country's Eid congregation at Sholakia in Kishoreganj.



Representatives of various private and public universities attend a views exchange meeting on public security organised by home and education ministries at Krishibid Institution in Dhaka on Sunday.  
— New Age photo

Currently three terrorist groups are active in country—Hizb Ut-Tahrir, Ansar al-Islam and neo-Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police additional commissioner and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit chief Monirul Islam in his key note speech.

Almost all members of Hizb Ut-Tahrir are students and teachers of colleges and universities, a maximum number of Ansar al-Islam member are students of colleges and universities or dropouts and almost half of the members of the neo-JMB are studying at colleges and universities, he added.

'There are some educa-

tional institutions why are actively misguiding students. Some teachers are engaged in this process, which is really unfortunate,' said Nahid adding 'we will take steps against such educational institutions and teachers.'

'There are only a few derailed youths. We have information about them and legal action will be taken against them,' Asaduzzaman Khan said, adding that religious extremists are frequently changing their tactics and a new generation is getting involved in their activities, which is matter of concern.

He urged universities to take steps so that the new generation does not get involved in extreme religious activities

and take up research on why they are getting involved with such activities.

He said that detectives had information that attacks could take place in Gulshan and Solakia prior to the incidents and law enforcement agencies reacted quickly.

Police officials at the programme said that masjids, prayer rooms, library, laboratory, canteen/coffee shop and other facilities of colleges are being used as incubators of growing religious extremist activities.

In the past, madrassah students were inclined to religious extremism but now students of English medium schools are also inclined to such activities, which is a

matter of concern, said AKM Shahidul Hoque, inspector general of police.

He urged teachers to strengthen their monitoring of students as they spend a large amount of time at educational institutions and assured that law enforcing agencies will work beside them to contain extremist activities.

University Grants Commission chairman Abdul Mannan, University of Development Alternative vice-chancellor Emajuddin Ahamed, North South University VC Atiqul Islam all admitted that teachers have role to play to curb extremist activities but guardians should be more vigilant on what their children are doing.

Emajuddin also emphasized on increasing co curriculum and cultural activities at the private universities to change the scenario.

Ruling party-backed Chhatra League president Saifur Rahman Sohag and general secretary SM Jakir Hossain said student politics should be allowed at the private universities to stop students from getting derailed.

Police officials also recommended for forming anti militancy committees, increasing games and cultural facilities at educational institutions, increasing vigil at masjids and prayers rooms to look out for students who stay at these place after prayer time, observing national days etc.

Several owners, VCs and top police officials also spoke at the views exchange programme.