

7th Asia-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference Opening Ceremony

Address

By

HE Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

My Cabinet colleagues,
Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force,
Director of Defence Intelligence Agency Mr Douglas H Wise,
Director General of DGFI,
Participating defence intelligence chiefs of the Asia-Pacific region,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and very good morning.

I welcome you all at the opening ceremony of the 7th Asia-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference jointly organised by the Pacific Command of the USA and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence of Bangladesh.

Under the present global context such conference bears an immense importance as the world is passing through a critical juncture. There is a sprout of militancy and terrorism across the world. These terrorist groups are posing threat to the life and property of the common people alongside the world peace. It's a great challenge for the peace-loving people of today's world to face the terrorist groups for maintaining global peace.

The people of Bangladesh, which emerged through an unprecedented bloodshed, are always in favour of peace. The Greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a staunch believer of non-violent policy. Soon after the independence, the country's foreign policy that was adopted by Bangabandhu, contained the theme: "Friendship to all and malice to none". Bangladesh is still adhering to this policy.

But my family and I myself time and again was the targets of terrorists. My father and Farther of the Nation was a victim of brutal assassination in the contemporary human history. I myself was repeatedly attacked by the terrorists. The grenade attack on my public rally on 21st August in 2004 was the grievous one that claimed lives of 24 Awami League leaders and workers, including our woman leader Ivy Rahman.

Yet, today, I would like to declare once again that no amount of threat will be able to stop me from going after them. I will not step back even if it endangers my life.

I would remain oblige till my death to the pledge on eradicating terrorism that I made at the United Nation General Assembly in 2009.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Political will no doubt is an important factor in combating terrorism. Because, our experience shows that militancy spreads under the patronisation of political parties.

My government adopts 'zero tolerance' policy towards terrorism. That is why, we are an active partner of all international deals, conventions and initiatives dealing with terrorism and militancy. Alongside, we framed necessary laws and took measures to face terrorism.

We formed a 17-member National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention in 2009 to tackle extremism and mobilise public opinion against such activities. Our government banned all terrorist groups designated as such by the UN Security Council Committee.

In 2009, we enacted Anti Terrorism Act, a specific legislation designed to combat terrorism in line the UN's Action plan on counter terrorism strategy and other resolutions. The act has been amended twice, the latest one in 2013.

Our government formulated a strong anti militancy National Education Policy where massive reforms have been proposed for religious education curriculum.

In 2011, the government formulated a National Counter Terrorism Strategy. In that year Bangladesh acceded to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes.

Financing plays an important role in spreading militancy. We enacted various laws and took measures to prevent financing to the terrorists in line with international laws and conventions.

In 2012, the government enacted the Money Laundering Prevention Act which is the first legislation in Bangladesh making specific provisions for money laundering and terrorism financing. Bangladesh Bank has taken effective steps to curb terrorism financing.

In 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 41-member Asia Pacific Group on money laundering.

Owing to Bangladesh's successful reforms to anti-money laundering and anti terrorist financing measures, the Financial Task Force, an inter-state organisation comprising 34 developed countries and two regional organisations, removed Bangladesh's name from their 'grey list'.

Besides, separate bilateral deals and memorandums were signed with USA, UK, India, Australia and few other countries to combat terrorism and militancy. We are also implementing the SAARC anti-terrorism agreement.

Enhancement of the capacity of the law enforcers is essential to combat terrorism. We have taken measures to train and equip our forces to prepare them better for fighting terrorism. At the same time we have enforced strict compliance regulations to prevent human rights violations in our fight against terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I always tell a word that the terrorists do not have any boundary. They are the enemy of the country, its people and the entire humanity. They are the barriers to the world peace.

The main objective of your intelligence work is to establish world peace. In the past, the terrorists used to work in isolation and had hardly any coordination and cooperation with their associates in other parts of the world. But today, due to the technological advancement, they work in a more coordinated manner with unprecedented cooperation among different groups all over the world.

They now enjoy increased mobility; communicate with greater ease and have vast territory to hide.

The kind of security challenges that confront the mankind today cannot be faced alone by any country. The world would have to work in unison and in a holistic manner to face the menace.

I hope this Conference will remove the walls that divide you; will reduce the physical and psychological distance between and among you; and develop better cooperation and understanding.

Remember, the terrorists and extremists are always innovating and improvising their ways and means for their very existence. Whenever you unearth some of their strategies and techniques; they switch to newer methods. So, you have really a very challenging mission.

You have to remain in constant vigil and the government's decision making process and their application depends on your success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this Conference – "The Future: Challenges and Opportunities for Security Cooperation" is timely and befitting one under current global context.

You are going to have deliberations on counterterrorism, maritime security and the future trends and other important issue for bringing peace and stability in our region. I believe, programmes like APICC can effectively contribute in increasing that cooperation and understanding.

I would like to request you to make the best uses of the time here. I am confident that with your intellect, hard work and dedication you would be able to find out new strategies, tactics and techniques that will make stronger your bond, and invalidate and defeat the enemies.

I would like to thank you all for joining this Conference and making it a success.

With this few words, I hereby declare the 7th Asia Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference open. Wish you all a good luck.

Khoda Hafez
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
