

Bangladesh on high alert after bloggers' killing: Minister

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Dhaka: Bangladesh is on high alert following the hacking to death of three secular bloggers in recent months, a senior minister said as he blamed home-grown elements like fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami for the brutal killings that made global headlines.

“In our country, there are times when such incidents do take place when the fundamentalists try to create a problem by disturbing the peaceful atmosphere but we are on a high alert so that they don’t get successful in their plans,” Minister of state for Home affairs Asaduzzaman Khan said.

“Not only bloggers, they have sent threats to leading intellectuals of our country and also politicians, including me but we can’t be cowed down by such threats,” Khan told PTI. When asked what are the steps the government has taken in the aftermath of the killings that shocked the international community, Khan said fool-proof security has been arranged for the bloggers.

“We have also taken action and arrested few suspects,” he added.

However, responding to a question, Khan ruled out any involvement of an international terrorist organisation like al-Qaeda or its Indian chapter al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in the killings of Ananta Bijoy Das, Avijit Roy and Washiqur Rahman.

“No, I don’t think so there is any involvement of any foreign organisation like al-Qaeda or other terror groups. This is the handiwork of our home-grown elements like Jamaat who have been trying to create problems in our country for last few years,” he said.

He also echoed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s commitment that Bangladeshi soil won’t be allowed to be used by any terrorist group as a launching pad against India. Khan said that the Bangladesh government is taking stern action against some fundamental elements for their role in fake Indian currency notes (FICN) rackets which are causing an adverse impact on the economy of both the countries.

“The Bangladeshi soil won’t be allowed to be used for any anti-Indian activity. India is a friend of Bangladesh. The Awami League government after coming to power has taken strong action against such elements whoever is involved in anti-India activity.

“After dollar, Indian rupee is most familiar currency in terms of trade and business in Bangladesh as every day people from India and Bangladesh are visiting both the countries. So if a fake currency racket is active, it is not at all good for either of the countries,” Khan said.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Dhaka on Saturday, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on Prevention of Human Trafficking; Prevention of Smuggling and Circulation of Fake Currency notes; and setting up an Indian Economic Zone were also reached by the two sides.

Reminiscing the role played by India during the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, Khan, a senior Awami league MP and a Mukti Joddha (liberation War Fighter) himself, feels that Modi’s recent Dhaka visit and signing of the LBA between the two countries will strengthen the relationship between both the countries.

Khan, however, expressed his concerns while talking about the October 2 Burdwan blast in West Bengal last year, which killed two Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) terrorists and unearthed a terror module that had established their network in different places across eastern India, which was plotting against both the countries.

“Whatever information we have received from the Indian intelligence agencies, we have taken stern action on it and have worked on it. We have also shared all the intelligence that India had asked for regarding this case,” Khan said.

“But if the cooperation and coordination between the intelligence agencies of both the countries can be increased then it would be more helpful and effective in dealing with these fundamental and terrorist elements,” he said.

When asked whether the Bangladesh Home ministry has any information whether the funds of the Saradha chitfund and other Indian grown Ponzi schemes were diverted in helping the fundamentalists of Bangladesh, including the JMB, Khan said:

“We too had heard that some money was used in creating disturbance.

“We have heard that the money had come but we don’t know from where it had come or through which channel. Not only chitfunds but funds by using various money laundering agencies too were used in creating disturbances. But I can’t give any exact information right now.

“But I can assure that we have taken actions to stop that flow of money and now funds can’t arrive in that way. We have identified the routes and sealed it.”