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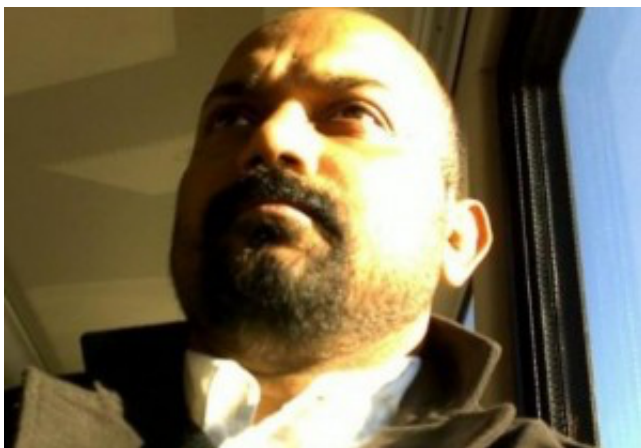
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Burdwan incident: 'There is more than meets the eye'

by [Newsroom Staff](#) 2 weeks ago

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Animesh Roul, Executive Director, Society for Study of Peace and Conflict, says that Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) has flourished with the help of local support. Speaking to **Newsroompost.com**, Roul says that unchecked influx of Bangladeshi Muslims created pockets of influence for political parties in West Bengal.

Newsroompost: What is your perception of the Burdwan incident?

Animesh Roul: Since the incident took place early October at Khagragarh, Burdwan, this was evidently clear (to me and perhaps many others) that the event has a strong link with the Bangladesh based organisations, either Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harakat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B), both of which can trace their lineage to Jamaat e Islami. There is more possibility of this being the handiwork of remnants of these groups which have been hiding on the Indian side of the border. Most of the fugitive militants have taken refuge in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya, taking advantage of porous borders and large migrant populations from the neighboring country. Now it is getting clearer that JMB's operatives were involved. NIA investigation is heading towards right direction. However, selective disclosure to the media or wild speculations could be damaging, especially the alleged assassination plots in Bangladesh. This was in their agenda since 2011. So not surprising enough and as a matter of fact these groups have no capability to do that now. Yes, serial crude bombings like in August 2005 could be a possibility. When anything like this (Burdwan incident) happens, we always should take into account local support that provided access to material, and other logistics. And also, I think this could be one of the many modules presently operating in India, whether they have ties with Indian separatists' militant groups like KLO or ULFA factions etc.

Newsroompost: Do you think the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (Bangladesh) was given a breather by the West Bengal government?

Animesh Roul: Of course these people are hiding in West Bengal, knowing that there is hardly any threat to their existence for various Socio-political and security reasons. Some of the reasons may be unaware government and complacent security apparatus. As a matter of fact, the West Bengal government is virtually clueless about the impending threats and why Bangladesh militant groups strive for Greater Bangladesh by merging the present West Bengal and some other region with their country. And the continuous influx of illegal Bengali speaking Muslim population from other side of the border and opportunities to settle down in India, would be detrimental in future. For example, a place called Madhaym Gram in West Bengal (there are other hotspots) has most Bangladeshi migrants with easy access to ration card and other social benefits. This unchecked influx of Bangladeshi Muslims created pockets of influence for political parties in West Bengal. There are many mini-Bangladesh in the state, but nothing to blame present government, the story of appeasement and vote bank politics goes back to decades long communist regimes. The Mamta Banerjee government is just managing the legacy fearing backlash and of course the fear of losing support base and recently gained power. When political infighting and confrontation between rival parties happen, Islamic radical groups thrive in this chaotic situation. Same situation is prevailing in both West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Newsroompost: Why do you think West Bengal was soft on the Jamaat (JMB)?

Animesh Roul: Just mentioned above. Governments of the day are unaware about this Islamist agenda. They simply could not read into Islamists future strategy. Poorly advised and lure of power make them weak to take resolute decision and think about national interest in longer term. It is time to wake the state governments to these stark realities. Not just the WB government, states like Andhra Pradesh and Odisha for example should check their backyards.

Newsroompost: How does this incident affect ties between India and Bangladesh?

Animesh Roul: Nothing would happen to the bilateral ties since the plot was foiled and we are not sure there could be other conspiracy plots are underway. Indian agencies are capable of thwarting more jihadi plots. Information sharing and CT cooperation is all-time high between India and Bangladesh at present. Dhaka administration knows the cross border nature of terrorism and both countries should pursue these militant networks more vigorously.

Newsroompost: Do you think the JMB will bounce back after this or will they retreat?

Animesh Roul: JMB is not operating as a monolith group for long as there is no central leadership. Yes it has morphed into many smaller groups like Tanjim e-Tamiruddin, BEM or Jamayatul Muslimeen. So we actually don't know which offshoots are based in India. Their strategy is to survive and resurge when opportunity comes. And for sure that they want to recreate the countrywide bombings of 2005 to topple the Hasina-led Awami League government. I am not sure about their strike against BNP or Khaleda Zia. Militants and over ground Islamists (Jamaat e Islami or Hepajat Islam) in Bangladesh see them as friends and sympathizers. Now JMB has support of Al Qaeda link radicals like Ansarullah Bangla Team. Al Zawahiri's specific call in January 2014 and the deteriorating political and religious situation in Bangladesh offer fertile ground for the growth of JMB and like minded jihadist groups. No doubt there are favorable conditions for JMB's consolidation of JMB and others in Bangladesh. Since AQIS came into existence, JMB, ABT and HujI-B get a life line: moral and the forthcoming financial support. There are evidence in Bangladesh that JMB and ABT cadres are involved in carrying out fresh recruitments in colleges and universities. The Expat Bangladeshi Samiun Rahman (from England) was arrested recently for trying to recruit youths for Syrian war theater. Even there is info that these new recruits would be getting training at a secret place in Chittagong and Bandarban area.

Newsroompost: Do you see the Al-Qaeda now coming into the picture considering their close association with the Jamaat?

Animesh Roul: Information is there that JMB and ABT cadres have already touched base with AQIS people in Pakistan. Of course there is 'confusion' within the JMB and other groups in Bangladesh at the moment where they should go. Local militants are watching the conflict in Syria and possible alliance between IS and Al Nushra Front (AQ's official affiliate). The September call of AQIS made them more confused and intrigued by the call of Caliphate under Mullah Omar (Afghanistan). Just to note, in early August this year, some (five masked men) Bangladesh youths have released a visual message supporting Al Bagdadi/ISIS. Now they will be contemplating joining AQIS bandwagon. With a strong grassroots organizational Structure and support base JMB might stage a comeback anytime either morphing or camouflaging itself under AQIS umbrella. Islamist groups calling for a sharia-based caliphate in Bangladesh will be influenced by the Al-Qaeda leader's latest call and establishment of Sub continental franchise, AQIS. This will largely help local militants to regroup for future action. AQIS new magazine (Resurgence) has documented why Bangladesh is a target: for extra judicial killings under Hasina government, atrocities of US/UK trained Rapid Action Battalion and rising influence of secular ideals. AQIS is invoking the story of Haji Shariatullah of Faraizi movement (early 19th century Wahabi follower)) for an Islamic revival in Bangladesh now.

Newsroompost: How should India tackle the issue from here on?

Animesh Roul: Central authorities should take over the issue in West Bengal immediately. I believe there is a robust nexus existing between political elites of Bangladesh and local gangs who must have facilitated migrations from Bangladesh and their settlement inside India. Border security and migration must be checked and joint intelligence coordination between Dhaka and Delhi should be enhanced. And last but not the least; interrogations should reach its proper and logical end, no administrative bottlenecks please. I believe there would be more than meets the eye.

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