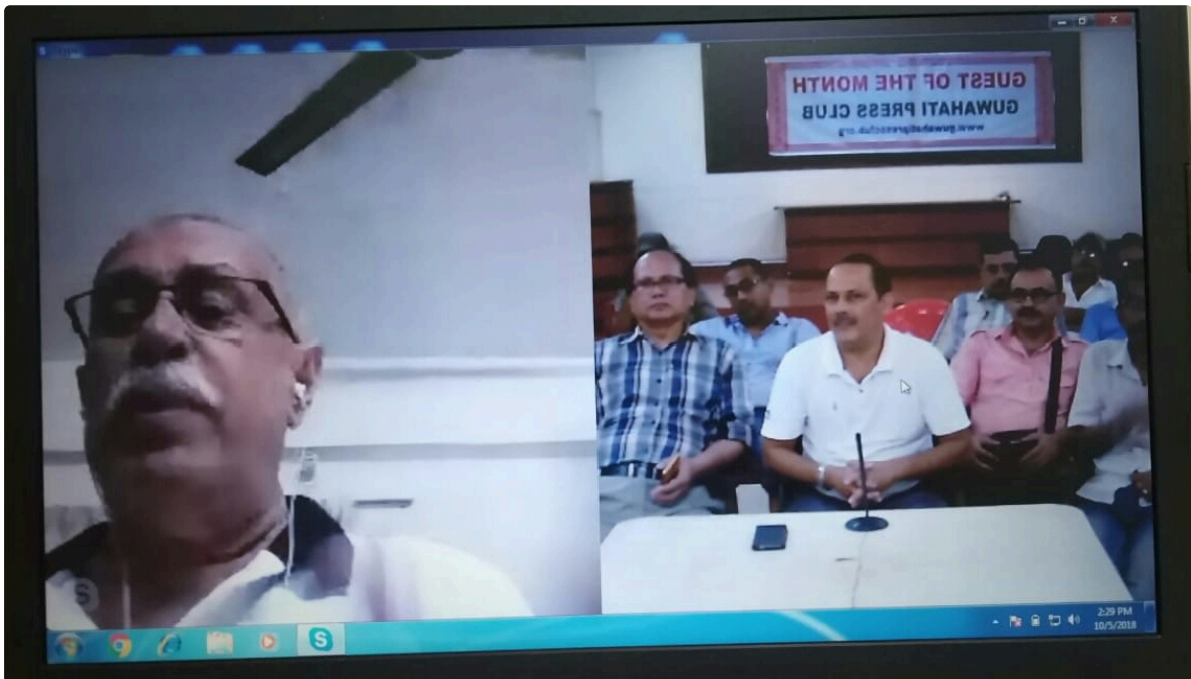


'Islamist fundamentalists in Bangladesh a threat to northeast India'



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Nava Thakuria 6 October 2018 11315 views

Guwahati: Rise of Islamist extremism in [Bangladesh](#) is not only posing a serious threat to the [Muslim](#) dominated country, but also to its neighbouring north-eastern States of [India](#) along with West Bengal. Speaking to a [group](#) of scribes at Guwahati Press Club from Dhaka through internet on Friday, prominent Bangladeshi journalist Saleem Samad made this comment.

An Ashoka Fellow and Hellman-Hammett Award recipient journalist also added that an upsurge of fundamentalist forces in [Bangladesh](#) poses serious threats not only to the religious minority communities there, but also to the secularists, intellectuals and other sects within the [Muslim](#) community.

Samad narrated how atheist & secularist bloggers are increasingly becoming the target of the Islamist forces in [Bangladesh](#), which has otherwise slowly (but steadily) marched on the path of becoming a country of one nationality (Bangladeshi), one language (Bengali) and one religion (Islam, more precisely Sunni [Muslim](#)).

The outspoken journalist made an observation that due to overwhelming majority of Sunni [Muslims](#) in the country, among whom considerable rise of extremism is observed, other minority sects within the [Muslim](#) community like Shia, Ahmadiya etc also face serious threat of survival.

Citing how a network of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen [Bangladesh](#) was busted in West Bengal few years back, Samad urged the north-eastern States to remain alert about jihadi elements. He revealed that thousands of Bangladeshi youths had already joined various militia groups in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan etc to [fight](#) alongside the jihadis there.

Answering queries from Guwahati scribes, the senior journalist reiterated that currently there is no northeastern militants in [Bangladesh](#) as the Sheikh Hasina government in Dhaka continues rigorous crackdowns against the outfits. Samad made it clear that Prime Minister Hasina would leave no stone unturned to weed out militancy in the country.

A front runner for media [rights](#), Samad painted a dismal picture of press freedom in [Bangladesh](#), as journalists are frequently targeted by both State and non-State actors. He regretted that though 26 Bangladeshi journalists lost their lives to assailants since 1991, not a single accused has been convicted till date.

In another significant remark, Samad, who works as special correspondent at The [Bangladesh](#) Monitor and contributes news-features to [India](#) Today, has divulged that none of the Indian [leaders](#) visiting Dhaka had taken up the issue of illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators in Assam ([India](#)) with their host counterparts.

Speaking about the process of [National](#) Register of Citizens updation in Assam, Samad asserted that for the [Bangladesh](#) government it is an internal affair of [India](#) only and hence it has not made any official statement [over](#) the development. He agreed that there were little media coverage in Bangla media [over](#) the NRC updation process and its outcome.

Strongly advocating people-to-people contact between Assam ([India](#)) and [Bangladesh](#), Samad lamented how the State had missed the bus despite being so closely located, while other States like West Bengal and [Tripura](#) were taking several steps to improve connectivity with [Bangladesh](#) via railway and roadways.

Advocating a regular bus and air services between Guwahati and Dhaka, Samad opined that [trade](#) & commerce along with cultural ties would help in erasing many misconceptions prevailing on both sides. He also claimed that more students and patients are expected to move from here to there & vice versa for better options and would enhance the tourism in both parts of the international divide.

Nava Thakuria

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BY NAVA THAKURIA

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