

ISI in Northeast India



Comments 2



Nava Thakuria 30 December 2007 25649 views

The people of Northeast India may not be strangers to the banned armed groups and their destructive activities, as more than 30 indigenous armed groups are waging a war against New Delhi for demands ranging from sovereignty to self-rule, but a recent development has woken up the residents of the restive region to a furthest threat from religious fundamentalist groups, which are patronized by the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan.

The media reports quoting various (government and non-government) sources, in the recent past, had claimed that the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) was in touch with Islamic militants. But what is awful for the people of the region that not less than 20 other native militia groups had come closer to the ISI. It was disclosed during the interrogation of an ISI operative, who was arrested by the Assam police in Guwahati on December 14. More shocking revelation for the entire nation is that the alliance ship has slowly slipped the insurgents groups into the clutches of Islamic militants.

The Assam police termed it a big success in the counter-terrorism operation in the Northeast. The arrested ISI operative is identified as SM Alam alias Mujibullah Alam alias Asfi Alam. Hailing from Ajampur village under Uttara police station in Dhaka of Bangladesh, Mr Alam, 35, has been recognized as an important functionary of ISI in charge of Assam and the Northeast. The police informed that Mr Alam was a member of Jamat-e-Islami and Chatra Shibir (of Bangladesh) and joined the Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen in 1993. The hardcore Bangladeshi national underwent training in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) also. Later he joined Jamat-ul-Mujahideen in 2005 and afterward he was recruited by the ISI. Soon he shifted his base to the restive Northeast in 2006. What was dreadful in confession of Mr Alam that 24 militant outfits of the region had maintained communication with the ISI networks.

The ISI of Pakistan is viewed as a notorious agency in Indian perspective as it continues spreading terror in many parts of India. However, it is recognized as the largest and most powerful intelligence service in Pakistan. Created as an independent unit in 1948, the ISI officially handles external intelligence gathering for the Pakistan government. Headquartered at Islamabad, the ISI is known as a disciplined army unit with around 10,000 staffs. It however faces allegations of meddling in the internal affairs of its neighboring countries.

This writer tried to contact the responsible officers of the Inter Services Public Relations, Pakistan Armed Forces, of which ISI is an unit, for their reactions regarding the arrest of Mr Alam in Assam. While responding to the phone calls, an additional director (in charge of foreign media) of Inter Services Public Relations had only said that the arrest of the ISI operative was not in his knowledge. He assured of his inputs later, though it has not reached till date. Moreover, a query submitted in the website of ISPR also could not resulted in any response. What signifies that, the officials of ISPR, while responding to phone calls from thus writer, did not summarily rejected the news item that one of their operatives was arrested in India.

The Indian security agencies have repeatedly claimed that ISI was involved in many disruptive activities in the country. The ISI is also blamed for masterminding explosions in different cities of the country including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Nagar, Malegaon, Varanasi, Guwahati etc. Moreover, the Pakistani agency is made responsible for abetting terrorism in many parts of India including the Kashmir valley and the Northeast. The ISI reportedly takes responsibility to supply sophisticated arms and also guerrilla training to the militant groups.

The ISI has already made a base in Bangladesh and continued its activities in the Northeast. Speaking to this writer from Dhaka, a senior Bangladeshi journalist supplanted the finding, "The Pakistani intelligence agency (ISI) has been actively operating in Bangladesh under a number of cover ups. In the recent months, large numbers of ex-Army officials from Pakistan have come to Bangladesh to work with different business groups. Most of the top figures in these companies are either former military personnel or well connected to the Pakistan Army."

The journalist, who wanted anonymity also added, "Personally I believe, those Pakistani Army officials should not be retired personnel. They might be important officials of the ISI. What my information says, a huge amount of profit of those companies goes to the hidden activities of the agency. I suspect, the ISI has a significant amount of shares in those companies (including one mobile phone service provider) working in Bangladesh." Recent intelligence inputs even shocked the administration in particular and people in general that ISI and Religious fundamentalists had planned for major strikes in various important locations including the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati. The temple of mother goddesses Kamakhya is one of the major Shakti Peeths in India and is recognized a highly sacred place for Hindus. The local government has already made a high alert through out the state after unearthing the new threat.

JP Rajkhowa, a bureaucrat turned media columnist, while quoting intelligence reports, stated that over 20 jihadi groups including Muslim Tiger Force of Assam, Muslim United Liberation Force of Assam, Muslim United Liberation Army, United Muslim Front of Assam, United Islamic Reformation Movement of India, Muslim Security Force, United Liberation Militia of Assam, Muslim Security Council of Assam, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami, People's United Liberation Front, Revolutionary Muslim Commandoes, Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, Students' Islamic Movement of India, Laskar-e-Taiba etc are active in the region. "All these groups want to carve out an Islamic state of Assam," he commented.

The Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi maintained his views that ULFA was under the grip of ISI and that is why they cannot come for talks. Attending a meeting on internal security affairs, which was chaired by the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on December 20 in New Delhi, Mr Gogoi expressed his serious concern that the ISI had been trying its best to make the Northeast a hub of terrorism. Earlier the issue of the Northeastern militants' link with the ISI found space for discussion in the Parliament. "Available inputs indicate that some Indian insurgent groups active in the north-eastern region have been using the territory of Bangladesh, and have links with Pakistan's ISI," Shriprakash Jaiswal, the minister of state for Home informed Rajya Sabha on December 5. The minister also added that New Delhi had taken up the issue with Islamabad.

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