

Economic crisis no excuse to let guard down on security issues :SM Jayakumar

Shereena Sajeed
938LIVE, 13 April 2009

A renewed call not to let the guards down.

It from from the Senior Minister of State and Coordinating Minister for National Security Professor S Jayakumar, at the launch of the **3rd Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior National Security Officers**.

He says as governments tackle the economic challenges, bilateral and multilateral security cooperation must continue to be enhanced as the threat of terrorism remains a trans-national one.

Recent attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore and the Mumbai attacks serve as reminders that the threat of trans-national terrorism still persists.

The challenge that national security agencies face is to stay ahead and recognise that the threat of terrorism is intelligent, with deep ideological roots and ever-evolving.

Professor Jayakumar said the attacks in Mumbai showed the pivotal role of ground officers because the more prepared the frontline policemen are, the more they can mitigate the impact of the attack.

Striking a balance between the need to give the public information with the need to ensure effectiveness of security operations is another key lesson that can be drawn from the attacks.

"The question is how to do this without jeopardising the success of the operations and without putting lives at further risk; and without the media coverage unwittingly aiding the terrorists. It is therefore imperative that national security agencies also develop a strategy and have a plan for media management to mitigate this risk."

Despite the global economic downturn, Professor Jayakumar urged all like-minded nations to continue to take counter-terrorism efforts seriously and channel adequate resources to risk management.

In Singapore, there are initiatives such as the Community Engagement Programme to foster better inter-ethnic relations between different communities.

Another target group to reach out to are the youths.

A programme that encourages secondary-school scouts to learn the concept of resilience and appreciate the security challenges facing Singapore was officially launched by Prof Jayakumar.

"The programme features an interactive syllabus which includes project work, site-visits, and camps. The full syllabus will be rolled out to all secondary school's Scout

Troops this year. The National Resillience Badge and other national security education programmes serve to raise awareness and help protect our youths from radicalisation."

In all, it is estimated that there were close to 300 terrorist attacks worldwide last year, with about 3,000 deaths and 8,000 injured.