

## ANTI-EXTREMISM CAMPAIGN

# Govt to sit with college, madrassahs

### Staff Correspondent

THE government is going to sit with the authorities and teachers of all colleges and madrassahs as part of its campaign against religious extremism.

'We would soon sit with the authorities of colleges under National University and madrassahs to make them aware about current extreme religious activities,' said education minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

Officials said that the government decided to sit with educational institutions, including universities, as prime minister Sheikh Hasina at the weekly cabinet meeting on July 11 asked her cabinet colleagues to keep vigil all the time and launch 'intensive campaigns' against religious extremism among people from every walk of life amidst fear

that more extremist attacks might take place.

The government took the step to keep students away from religious extremism as involvement of some former or current private university students in the recent extremist attacks on a Gulshan café in the capital and a police-checkpoint near the country's largest Eid congregation at Sholakia in Kishoreganj were reported.

Government already held a meeting with vice-chancellors, senior teachers and representatives of students and owners of the private universities last Sunday and is scheduled to hold a meeting with authorities of public universities on July 23.

Education officials said that education minister would be present as chief guest at both the discussions with college and madrassah teachers.

Meeting with colleges under National University will take place on July 21 while meeting with madrassah will take place on July 24, said the officials.

Both the meeting will be held at the Krishibid Institutions auditorium.

There are 2,000 affiliated colleges under National University and about 9,000 madrassahs.

Lack of facilities for co-curricular activities, cultural programmes, debates, games, absence of programmes marking national days at educational institutes are some major reasons why students were becoming soft targets of recruiters of religious extremism, discussants at the views exchange meeting with the authorities of private university observed.

Currently three terrorist groups —Hizb Ut-Tahrir,

Ansar al-Islam and Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh — are active in the country, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police additional commissioner and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit chief Monirul Islam in his keynote speech.

Almost all members of Hizb Ut-Tahrir are students and teachers of colleges and universities, a maximum number of Ansar al-Islam member are students of colleges and universities or dropouts and almost half of the members of the neo-JMB are studying at colleges and universities, he added.

Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Nurul Islam Nahid and top police officials at the programme warned that educational institutions responsible for driving students toward religious extremism would face consequences.