

Closed Door Public Lecture on
“Regulating the Digital Educational and Religious Space”

29th July 2021 from 1400hrs – 1600 hrs

Organized by Institute of National Security Studies



Institute of National Security Studies, the premier think tank on National Security established under the Ministry of Defence Sri Lanka organized a Closed Door Public Lecture titled “Regulating the Digital Educational and Religious Space” which was held on 29th July 2021 from 1400 hrs – 1600 hrs (IST) at the conference hall of INSS. The guest speakers for the event were Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Director General of INSS, Mr. S.H. Harischandra, Secretary, State Ministry of Dhamma Schools, Pirivenas and Bhikkhu Education and Mr. Shabry Haleemdeen, Chairman of Wakfs Board. Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena, Director (Communication and Publication), INSS moderated the event. He initially welcomed the guest speakers and opened the floor to a comprehensive dialogue on the regulating digital, educational and religious space. The audience was comprised of representatives from Ministries, tri forces, intelligence agencies and academics.

Guest speaker of the event Professor Rohan Gunaratna addressed the audience, stating that current ways of terrorism and extremism cannot be addressed only by the law enforcement agencies and military or both. These services must work with cooperation, collaborations and partnerships. He iterated 3 important aspects. initially, other countries have taken measures to curb terrorism and extremism by partnering with religious, educational and digital institutions. Secondly, it is unless the relationship is built with education and religious and information institutions, terrorism will topple down with extremism and exclusivism. Thirdly; it is essential to regulate the national education system to create a multi ethnic and multi religious educational environment to produce Sri Lankans.

On behalf of Mr. S.H. Harischandra, Secretary, State Ministry of Dhamma Schools, Pirivenas and Bhikkhu Education; Ms. B. Damayanthi Wickramathilake presented a presentation on several aspects including historical background of the Sri Lankan education system. She also presented the scope of education; pointing the importance of education as a balanced integration of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, social behaviors. It was expressed that formal education is the structured and systematic form of learning and emphasized that education of a certain standard can only be delivered to students by trained teachers, based on a standard curriculum. The Speaker also mentioned that education is a compulsory right, guaranteed by enactments of law and gazette regulations.

Mr. Shabry Haleemdeen, Chairman of the Wakfs board elaborated on the law, role and the functions of a Wakfs board. The speaker elaborated on the quazi judicial function of the board; why it has been practiced from 1505, even during the times of the Portuguese, the Dutch and why it was codified by the

British as “Mohomadan code”. He further stated that it has now been made mandatory for all Moulavis’ to learn Sinhala as a compulsory language. The speaker also pointed that; the act provides power only to govern the shrines and mosques but not the Madrasas. He further enlightened the audience that all audits of Mosques and Shrines are carried out by the government and fiscal management are strictly supervised by the Wakfs board.

The meeting concluded with a very informative and insightful discussion session and the hope of meeting again for another gathering.