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Press Release

JMI organizes Online Lecture on ‘The Growing Radicalisation in the Maldives’

The MMAJ Academy of International Studies, organised a lecture “The Growing Radicalisation in the Maldives,” by Dr N. Manoharan, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and History, Christ University, on 15th July 2021.

Prof. Ajay Darshan Behera, Officiating Director of the MMAJ Academy of International Studies, in his initial remarks highlighted the lack of academic interest and paucity of literature on Maldives. The small size and the benign image of the country has been the reason for this disinterest. Earlier there was one focus area for studies on Maldives, i.e environment. However, for a decade now, radicalisation in Maldives has emerged as a major issue that demands academic attention.

Dr. N. Manoharan began his lecture by stating that Maldives, which is known for its luxury tourism, is an Islamic society, and traditionally a tolerant society. However, the paradox of Maldives is the rise in violent radicalisation in the last decade. From 2007 to 2021 there has been a spate of explosions, assassinations and violent events. He explained the internal and external factors that are responsible for the radicalisation in Maldives. The internal factors include political instability, political repression within the state, the politicisation of religion, economic disparity and funding of local radical groups from West Asia. The consequences of radicalisation in Maldives includes the rise of authoritarianism in the political system and a decline in tourism as the spread of violence and attacks on tourists has affected this sector. The radicalisation in the Maldives also has some consequences for countries like India as there are some terrorist groups such as the LeT that are reportedly using Maldives as a base against India

He discussed various countermeasures that the Maldivian government has taken to counter radicalisation. According to him, the actions include military measures. However, all the efforts have not helped much because the state is appeasing the fundamentalists and radicals. He added that the diplomatic and economic measures are negligible as the state is not stopping the global flow of Jihadist and radical movements inside the country. One of the most important countermeasures, according to him was that the state should focus on reducing economic inequality that includes issues such as youth unemployment. Moreover, the country needs an independent judiciary and autonomous institutions for deradicalisation. There is a need to address its legal inconsistencies to frame and execute a deradicalisation programme. The law should regulate political parties from using religion as a political tool. Lastly, he stated the country should seek international cooperation for capacity building, intelligence sharing, and providing resources for counter radicalisation.

Participants from all across India attended the lecture. It was followed by a question and answer session where the participants raised several questions. Professor Ajay Darshan Behera thanked the speaker for his critical observations and insights and enthusiastic participation of the audience.