

Militants manage to circumvent the system

Better database keeping and monitoring are needed

THE arrest of Ariful Islam, caught after he, along with his accomplices, hacked to death Oyasiqur Rahman Babu, has by default, brought to light some significant inefficiencies in law enforcement. Ariful had been arrested in 2012 for taking training in militancy in Narsingdi. Despite being charged under the anti terrorism act and sent to jail, he managed to secure bail three weeks later. Not only that, he has managed to stay outside the radar of law enforcing agents until March 30, 2015 when passersby caught him while fleeing the crime scene. According to this paper's report, there have been several such cases of militants being apprehended, after which they manage to get bail and carry out deadly missions. A JMB leader, for instance, was arrested last year, released on bail, following which he carried out an ambush on a police van to free three top JMB leaders.

This absence of a strong tracking system has led to terrorist acts being carried out with such ease. Obviously there needs to be a major revamp in the way personal files of criminals are kept and their whereabouts, if they are granted bail, tracked. Introducing a full-proof database of all records of those arrested, charge-sheeted or sent to jail can be an excellent way to make sure that criminals do not find ways to dupe the system and escape. Such database should be available to all police stations in the country. An investment in making our police stations more technologically equipped will make sure suspects with a record of criminality will not get away.

Bring home our boys

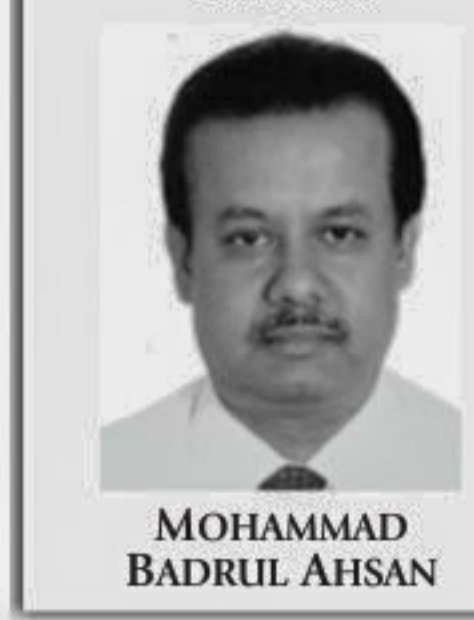
Co-ordinated effort key

THE government has formally enlisted the help of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for the estimated 1,500 to 3,000 Bangladeshis trapped in war-ravaged Yemen. We are informed that the Foreign Ministry is sending two officials to take necessary measures to verify nationalities and then take steps to help them find transportation back home from the port city of Aden. As Bangladesh formally declares support to the Saudi-led coalition that has launched attacks against Shia Houthi forces in that country, the situation has become very fluid on the ground. Time is of the essence to repatriate our citizens from Yemen before the small window of opportunity that exists for evacuation closes.

Beyond the IOM, India which is already involved in evacuating its own nationals and has helped some Sri Lankan citizens do the same has offered help to us. While countries like India and Pakistan have sent ships and other forms of transport to get their nationals out of harm's way as soon as possible, we are still in the process of mobilising our merchant fleet. A response from IOM is expected shortly and since we have no formal diplomatic presence in Yemen, the logistics are somewhat stretched. The fact that the national airline has no direct flights to Yemen does little to help matters. Despite that, it is imperative that coordinated and concerted efforts are made by our missions in the region with international agencies and other countries to contact Bangladeshi expa-

Nobody is guilty when everybody carries the blame

CROSS TALK



MOHAMMAD
BADRUL AHSAN

JENNIFER Jacquet writes in her book "Is Shame Necessary?" that it's shame that nudged Bill Gates to build the largest charitable organisation in the world after Microsoft's image was tarnished by the high-profile anti-trust trial of the mid-1990s. As further proof that shame is necessary in life, she quotes from Martin Luther King that non-cooperation and boycotts were merely means to awaken the sense of moral shame in the opponent. Thus the power of shame forces an individual to see himself through the eyes of others. When he is ashamed, it means he knows he has reasons to feel embarrassed.

That knowledge of embarrassment makes a difference. C. G. Jung described shame as a soul-eating emotion. It works like the diesel generator in our apartment buildings, kicking in every time power shuts down. Any moral failure is meant to create moral compunction in a sensible mind. Orson Scott tells us in "Ender's Shadow" that suicide is not when someone wishes to die but when someone wishes to hide.

The history of public shaming goes back in time. Many countries have publicly punished criminals by stoning, public hangings, and witch trials. There were times when women, who committed adultery, were forced to wear a red letter "A" as a symbol of their infidelity. Similarly, during World War II, the Jews were forced to wear gold stars. Back then shame was when people had to

wear their sins on their sleeves.

Even to this day Sharia courts in our distant villages continue to issue fatwas, largely limited to sexual aberrations and primarily targeting women. The accused get their heads shaved and they are flogged; in several cases aborted attempts were made to stone them to death. Cutting through the clutter of prejudices, the underlying principle of this miscarriage of justice is to enforce the rule of shame. People going against social norms are compelled to do public penance.

But the most shameful shame of our time is that shame itself has gone shamelessly out of style. While it's still available in limited edition for adulterers and fornicators, shame as an emotion has been banished from our lives. If shame is taken by its lexical meaning, where do we find anybody around us who is troubled by his or her consciousness of guilt, shortcoming or impropriety? The entire concept of right and wrong has been turned into a casino business. The only thing that matters is winning, losers having no moral ground.

It's perhaps redundant to identify any particular group of people to prove that point! We have got criminal cops, jaundiced journalists, jumpy judges, derelict doctors, esurient engineers, treacherous teachers, banal bureaucrats and bodacious businessmen, all of whom are convinced that shame is nothing but a useless fig leaf to cover naked ambitions. Adventure comes to them from ambition as naturally as rivers begin in mountains.

Like beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, shame lies in the soul of the repentant. Repentance comes from the admission of guilt, if not in public but in one's own private reflection. And that reflection arises from honesty, which hunts down moral lapses inside the conscience of an individual like a

posse goes after an outlaw.

Conscience is the gravitational force of the moral universe, and it gives weight to scruples to keep them grounded. Shame and guilt are its two components, where the former reflects how we feel about ourselves and the latter involves the awareness that our actions have injured someone else. These two emotions, more or less, cover the entire moral spectrum. He who doesn't feel ashamed doesn't feel guilty, equally true the other way around.

Neither of these emotions works in us. We are living in a country where doing wrong and being wronged aren't part of the social discourse anymore. In this country, fake freedom fighters sit in the government, bribe-takers strut and fret like peacocks, 5,000 alleged fake master's and doctoral certificate holders work in the top echelons of public and private sectors, and loan defaulters dominate politics and finance. Nobody is accountable for his or her speech or action, as convenience sublimates conviction.

Instead of shame, we wear our shamelessness as a badge of honour. Living beyond means and pretending to have more weight than worth, the emphasis is on packaging but not on product. We flaunt our mischief, ignorance, and incompetence in everything we do or say as ludicrous as someone covering the head when his bottom is exposed.

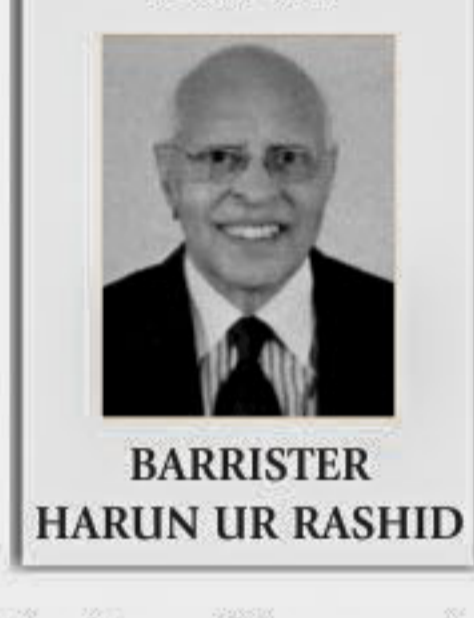
In the 1998 Hollywood movie, 'Dr. Doolittle', a young boy asks why the dogs sniff each other's behinds, and his own dog replies that it's their version of a handshake. That handshake now pervades our society where nobody feels guilty because everybody carries blame. Each of us is zealously guarding the guilt of others to deflect his own.

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Sri Lanka balances its ties with two Asian giants

BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER
HARUN UR RASHID

SRI Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on 25th March began a four-day visit to China to rebalance Colombo's close ties with Beijing amid reports he might seek to renegotiate the 'expensive' Chinese loans and discuss the future of the suspended \$1.5 billion Colombo Port project.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera who visited China last month to pave the way for Sirisena's visit had said his government would bring Colombo's foreign policy back to centre, meaning pursuing good relations with all the countries, including China, India and the US.

Sirisena's surprise election win presented a diplomatic challenge to Beijing as it seeks to expand its political and economic influence in the Indian Ocean region.

On his first visit to China after boosting ties with India with back-to-back visits by him and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sirisena held talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on 26th March during which the two leaders reportedly discussed the future of five billion dollar Chinese loans which Colombo said were borrowed at high interest rates by previous President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The project was regarded key to the implementation of Xi's pet Maritime Silk Road project in the Indian Ocean.

The two Presidents witnessed in Beijing the signing of agreements on healthcare, construction and urban development.

Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao told the media after the talks that the two leaders agreed to strengthen trilateral cooperation between China, Sri Lanka and India. "The three are all important countries in the region. It will

be really beneficial for the three counties to have cooperation in the areas like economic and social development. It is part of the China and South Asia cooperation," he said.

Being equidistant from East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, Sri Lanka is an important component of Xi Jinping's "New Silk Road" strategy of increasing China's economic ties with neighbours to the west and southeast.

Ever since Sirisena came to power defeating Mahinda Rajapaksa in January's presidential elections, Beijing has had to deal with a series of setbacks as Chinese-backed projects have come

alarmed at its growing engagement with countries like Sri Lanka and its forays into the waters it used to leave alone.

"Sri Lanka needs good relations with both China and India but Rajapaksa turned it into a zero sum game, which made him a liability for India," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Sri Lanka.

The new Sri Lankan government has made it clear that its foreign policy will be a balanced one between India and China. Seeking to pursue a balanced, non-aligned foreign policy that neither annoys nor pampers any nation. A

coastline.

Commenting on Sirisena's visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing here that China respected the recent decision made by Sri Lanka.

It is worthwhile to note that both China and India can help the goal of Sri Lankan national interest in a better fashion and people of Lanka are able to improve their lives as being the chief beneficiaries of the new government. This being the case, observers say that it will not be easy for Sri Lanka to sever all ties with China. Sri Lanka needs Chinese

Seeking to pursue a balanced, non-aligned foreign policy that neither annoys nor pampers any nation, A nation has to pursue its policy which advances its national interests and Sri Lanka does not wish to fall within the political orbit of China against India.



Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

under scrutiny for their links to corruption-tainted Rajapaksa.

Since a major driver of the New Silk Road policy is developing the backward and landlocked western areas in China by integrating them with the rest of the region, oil supply routes through the Indian Ocean can only be expected to get busier.

The docking of two submarines last year at a Colombo terminal built by Chinese companies is said to have been the last straw in India's relations with Rajapaksa. China's increasing activity in Indian Ocean is putting it on a collision course with India and the US, who are

nation has to pursue its policy which advances its national interests and Sri Lanka does not wish to fall within the political orbit of China against India.

It is noted that Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena made his first overseas trip as president to India in February, apparently indicating a willingness to revive the cooperative relationship. Sirisena signed a deal to receive training for Sri Lanka's civilian nuclear program. India's state-run National Thermal Power Corp. is expected to start work on a 500-megawatt thermal power plant in Trincomalee, a port on the eastern

investment for its economic development and it would be interesting to see how Sri Lanka balances its relation with India and China.

China has been watching closely the new government policy in Sri Lanka. China is in no mood to make any hasty decision in relation to Sri Lanka. China is aware that any government in Colombo will want China's monetary help. China has the capacity to help Sri Lanka make full use of its geographical advantage.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

COMMENTS

"Mustafa Kamal quits as ICC president"
(April 01, 2015)

Anonymous

Graceful departure. We must never bow to injustice and malpractice. Such kind of culture should be practiced in domestic politics.

"People will know my name"
(March 29, 2015)

Dev Yaha

What a psycho! Wanted to be infamous by killing 149 people including children?

"Protect nation from militants"
(March 26, 2015)

Barkat

Who will protect the nation from corrupt politicians and bureaucrats?

"Dhirendranath Dutta"
(March 27, 2015)

Akm Fazlul Bari

He was a great man and had the courage to speak for the betterment of his fellow countrymen.

"Get united for party-backed candidates"
(March 28, 2015)

Deep Purple Blue

It seems that the PM is so nervous that she is issuing warning to her own party men lest her party loses the crucial mayoral polls!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Set farmer-friendly marketing policy

Most of the boro and wheat growers of the country are smiling now seeing higher yields in the field this year. The growers deserve credit because they have overcome the disruptions to the supply of fertilisers and fuel due to the ongoing political unrest. Naturally, the unstable condition has led to increased production costs in arranging adequate water supply and ensuring availability of other inputs like fertiliser and seeds as well as power and diesel for irrigation.

However, though some 35 percent of the wheat crop has so far been harvested, farmers will start harvesting boro crop after the second week of April and complete harvesting by May. Reports say that the boro crop has been planted on 48.3 lakh hectares. The acreage of the current season is above last year's 47.9 lakh hectares. On the other hand, wheat acreage rose to 4.81 lakh hectares this season from 4.29 lakh hectares the previous year.

However, if the government fails to set grower-friendly marketing policy before harvesting season this year, farmers may incur loss this year also.

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