

Harassing a road safety campaigner

Extortion case against Mozammel questionable

THE Daily Star's investigative report on the extortion case filed against Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, has brought to light some major anomalies which question the authenticity of the case. Our reporters have found that the statements of the three witnesses in the case are identical, every detail of it, although the statements were taken at different times, and their addresses given in the charge sheet were also found to be false. What is more, the prime witness of the case told *The Daily Star* that he was not even aware that he was a witness in the case until a few days ago and that he didn't even know who Mozammel was. Also, the complainant of the case, a transport worker, said that he was not aware of the case and that he only signed a paper brought to him by some transport leaders. All these point to the fact that it was a fabricated case and a conspiracy against the road safety campaigner, whose organisation has been working to ensure passengers' rights and to make our roads safe.

The case against Mozammel was filed in September 2018 and police pressed charges against him on May 31 this year. We wonder what the police did in these eight months as the basic information of the complainant and the witnesses is wrong. Are we to believe that the charges have been pressed against the person based on a made-up case?

Now, the question is: why was Mozammel targeted? Was it his fault that he wanted our roads to be safe? The government accused his organisation several times in the past of giving "confusing information" about road accidents and the death tolls. His figures about road accidents may have been wrong, but that could have been countered by a government statement. But instead of doing that, some quarters in the transport sector have chosen to harass him by implicating him in a case which appears to be trumped up. This is anathema to the rule of law.

What drives students to such violence?

USTC incident needs proper investigation

PROFESSOR Mahmood, a professor of English at the University of Science and Technology of Chittagong (USTC), was dragged outside of the classroom on July 2 by some students where he was assaulted and one student tried to set him afire by pouring kerosene on him. The student has been arrested by police. It is pointless to discuss the merits of the accusation against the professor because what transpired at USTC is criminal and we condemn the violence. There are peaceful ways to diffuse potentially dangerous situations like this, but violence, especially when there is intent to kill, cannot be condoned under any circumstances.

Reportedly, students have been agitating against the teacher in question since April 16 for his alleged use of classroom to deliver "obscene" lectures. What have the university authorities been doing all this time? We understand that authorities formed a probe committee last May and found nothing amiss in the teacher's professional conduct. If that were the case, what could have instigated such a horrifying reaction by a section of the students? While we denounce the treatment the teacher has received, it is now a criminal case and the police need to do their own investigation into the matter. This incident will go down as a dark chapter in the history of violence in educational institutions in the country when students feel it within their rights to cause bodily harm to their teachers.

Extrajudicial killings is no answer



AIMAN R KHAN

A country's justice system has the responsibility to lawfully try any person accused of a crime, not the law enforcement. A person charged with an offence is supposed to be tried by the court of law until he is sentenced or set free. The law enforcers are only to identify the accused and work to bring him under the purview of justice. They do so to protect the rights and liberties of the citizens. But when the protectors act beyond their powers, it severely hampers the rule of law and the course of justice.

The killing of an offender, who has not undergone the judicial process, by a law enforcer, or "extrajudicial killing", is illegal in every aspect. It violates the Constitution and cannot be justified even if the accused was involved in the most heinous crime.

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SOURCE: WWW.EARTH.COM

"shootout" which is self-explanatory. The description of "crossfire" may have, at first, seemed "realistic" or somewhat plausible; but the frequency with which extrajudicial killings have been taking place in recent times, goes to show that there is reason to be concerned. Usually at a shootout, the possibility of casualties in both parties is high. But what's surprising is that in the country, it is the suspect that ends up getting killed almost every time. The lack of information and transparency surrounding these killings compounds the problem. According to rights group Ain O Salish Kendra, a record 466 people were killed via extrajudicial means last year. This presents an extremely bleak picture of human rights in the country.

Recently, a man named Nayan Bond was killed in a "gunfight". Nayan Bond was the prime suspect of the Rifat Sharif murder case that shocked us all. Everyone now knows about the horrific video that circulated around Facebook, which shows Rifat Sharif being brutally stabbed by a group of men, in broad daylight, on June 26. The video provided clear and strong evidence of Nayan's involvement in the killing. While the video and Rifat's cruel death were the talk of the town and people were eagerly waiting for the law enforcement agencies to arrest all the suspects, out of the blue, Nayan Bond

was found dead after a gunfight took place between him and the police. News reports confirmed the death of Nayan in Barguna Sadar Upazila after a raid conducted by the police. According to the police, Nayan's accomplices opened fire at them resulting in them retaliating. The accomplices fled the scene leaving a wounded Nayan beside the Payra River.

A surge of mixed reactions from the citizens flooded social media sites, where some people were seen praising the act. They believe a murderer like him deserved it. Are their reactions rational? Yes, to an extent, since the rage they're feeling is still fresh. But emotions can never fully justify an extrajudicial killing. If all accused persons were given such punishment for their misdeeds, then society would collapse.

Article 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh states: "To enjoy the protection of law, and to be treated in accordance with law, is the absolute right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action unfavourable to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law." When the Constitution itself promotes the safeguarding of life and liberty of the citizens, how can the

action of the protectors of the law be contradictory? Isn't the Constitution the law of the land that all governments and institutions must abide by? The Constitution is the supreme authority which demands that governments do their best to uphold citizens' fundamental rights. And extrajudicial killings violate the fundamental right to life and liberty.

Extrajudicial killings are condemned all over the world by various human rights groups, such as Amnesty International. The UN also regularly monitors such cases through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Extrajudicial killings are an example of usurpation of the rule of law and a total mockery of the criminal justice system. Recent statistics by local rights organisations show how the situation has deteriorated ever since the drive against drug peddlers began last year: "at least 292 people were killed in 'shootouts' with law enforcers till December 30, 2018." Bringing extrajudicial killings to a halt is a necessity for good governance. If people continue to be deprived of all judicial proceedings and killed in "gunfights" and "shootouts", people's reliance and trust in the justice system can never be restored.

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Power play in the Indian Ocean



SELINA MOHSIN

SRI Lanka and Maldives, by their mere locations, are of geostrategic significance in relation to east-west sea trade to and from South Asia. While Sri Lanka lies close to India's south-east, Maldives is located 400km south-west of India. The latter has 26 atolls and over 1,000 islands covering a huge maritime area stretching 750km from north to south. They are significant for China, India and US, who are all jostling for strategic positions in the Indian Ocean.

China has always been wooing Maldives and for the most part has

Also, Yameen broke the law of the land and sold islands and land to China. A free trade agreement was signed with China although Maldives' exports of USD 275,000 was grossly exceeded by imports of USD 342 million from China.

Yameen permitted the Chinese to build a Maritime Observatory on the northern islands. This irked New Delhi as it had a naval military base north of Maldives in Lakshadweep Islands.

New Delhi's concern was not only Maldives' proximity to India and Sri Lanka but that China should not become a dangerous rival across the whole Indian Ocean and control small states previously under India's influence. Yameen's five-year rule from 2013 was authoritarian and corrupt with stringent laws clamping down on political opponents (with Naseed fleeing into exile) and on all

was pledged though with condition that none of it should go to repay China. Six Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) were signed including regular ferry service from Maldives to Cochin and technical trainings. An Indian added coastal surveillance radar system has been inaugurated. Maldives will support India's non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council and later support India for a permanent seat when the UNSC is expanded.

Sri Lanka like Maldives is of critical importance. Both India and the US are concerned at China's acquisition of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka followed by Gwador on the Pakistani coast and a military base in Djiboti at the southern entrance to the Red Sea and Suez Canal. China's expansion of its navy poses a potential threat in the Indian Ocean.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi arriving in the Maldives.

PHOTO: TWITTER

been successful. When Yameen became president in 2013, Maldives became part of China's BRI maritime silk route and swung completely towards China and away from its traditional ties to India. Work on GMR airport in Male was taken away from an Indian company and became one of many contracts awarded to Chinese companies, including a 1.4km bridge linking Male' to the airport in Hulhule island.

The bridge was estimated to have cost over USD 1 billion. The project's critics found it a waste of money as tourists land in Hulhule airport and are immediately flown to their island resorts by sea planes.

forms of free speech and press freedom.

During the 2018 presidential election, the Indian Ocean Archipelago was something of a battleground for regional powers, with China aiming to further diminish India's role in the Maldives.

With Yameen's defeat in the 2018 election by Nasheed's second man Solih of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), the tables have turned in favour of India.

Solih made his first visit to India as president in November 2018 and proclaimed his pro-India policy. Modi visited Maldives after his own re-election. An Indian package of USD 1.4 billion

The US is directly involved because of its long-established air and maritime bases on Diego Garcia in the British Indian territory. This provides vital support to American operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan including Indian Ocean surveillance. Despite President's Trump's trade tension with India, Washington has been trying to develop its partnership with New Delhi to balance that of China and Pakistan.

Recently, US Secretary of State Pompeo on his way to the G20 Summit in Osaka, was forced to abandon a planned visit to Sri Lanka because of protests there over the leaked prospect of a defence deal

between Sri Lanka and the US. Opponents fear that it could involve basing US troops in Sri Lanka, subject to US law, plus sale of government land. America's interest to woo Sri Lanka is also indicated by USD 480 million to Sri Lanka from its "Millennium Challenge Corporation", for poverty reduction.

Much will depend on whether the new truce in US-China trade collaboration will bring an easing of relations, perhaps also allowing China to continue to import oil across the Indian Ocean from Iran and Gulf countries. If not, then there may be great risk that the maritime silk road will be an area of tension and potential conflict with Maldives and Sri Lanka exposed on both sides.

The problem of Maldives' debt to Chinese companies could be managed. BRI is facing difficulties. Nepal wants to re-negotiate its huge loan as well as Pakistan. Myanmar has opted out of a highway through its country. The high-speed rail project in Indonesia is fraught with complexities. China is learning from its mistakes.

The Chinese minister of culture stated that it wants to "consolidate their traditional friendship with Maldives to promote BRI to a new impetus."

Even so Solih and Nasheed will need both luck and skill to re-negotiate Chinese loan debts and to regain the islands. Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia has shown that it can be done. Solih has nothing like Mahathir's international experience but Beijing is facing difficulties and may wish to avoid confrontation.

Certainly, China will retain its interests in Maldives. They predate Yameen and will continue. But India, the oldest ally of Maldives, has returned with a bang and intends to stay.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Reforming our education system

Many critics have rightly argued that the higher education system in Bangladesh should incorporate more holistic curricula which cultivate students' passion, creativity, communication skills, and promote the importance of empathy and cross-cultural understanding. In today's rapidly changing and often unpredictable world, global markets increasingly require new hires who are not merely excellent in their own specific fields, but who can, more importantly, offer a valuable contribution to a broader problem-solving narrative in a way that elevates the conversations. The ideal education system would therefore be one where students are not only encouraged but rather required to participate in all their classes, and also enrol in certain classes outside the specialised academic discipline they are pursuing.

We can find the best example in the business profession, where knowledge of markets alone is never enough to reach the desired outcomes; a successful entrepreneur has to be innovative, well-spoken and persuasive. Similarly, a successful engineer should also possess a wide knowledge base relating to current affairs. The point of education is to serve a purpose, whether it be a greater cause or intellectual fulfilment. This "purpose" is one of the foundational traits of education, yet it is far too often diluted in the way lessons are being taught. It's time to reverse our parochial methodologies and work towards producing a well-rounded and diverse body of future graduates.

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