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Particulars which are Making the NGO Led Legal Aid Service Less Effective in Khulna: An Introspection

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ABSTRACT: Though the NGOs are providing legal aid service very successfully for the last two decades in Khulna, some limitations are available with this service. These limitations are not always the result of the negligence or defected systems of the NGOs but sometimes they are result of the will or demand of the donors or others stake holders. If the donors stop donation, NGOs will be bound to close their service. Limited number of cases and specific categories of people are accepted for legal aid due to shortage of funds. In many times, awareness programs on legal aid services are curtailed or made short for the same reason. Permanent office, sufficient manpower, own shelter home is some basic status of a legal aid providing NGO. But these facilities are unavailable to most of the NGOs in Khulna. If the NGOs make collaboration with the government and try ADR in some specific cases of legal aid, this service will be more fruitful. Moreover NGOs don't preserve data of the cases they provide legal aid. This paper actually tried to find out and analyse these limitations.

KEY WORDS: Legal Aid, Donor, Limitations, Litigations, NGO, Awareness

I. INTRODUCTION

Khulna is located in the south-west region of Bangladesh and it's a divisional Headquarter. Lot of government and non-government organisations are working here in different fields and both the organisations have inherent problems and limitations. The limitations of the NGOs are multifarious and different in nature. Most of the time, it depends upon the nature of the service provided by any NGOs. For the last 20 years different NGOs are providing legal aid to the poor and destitute people in Khulna. They follow very practical and innovative ways for providing legal aid. Legal aid providing NGOs of Khulna are definitely pro-active and dynamic in planning and rendering their services to the poor litigants, but on the other hand, they are so baseless that their activities can be stopped at any time. Because all the legal aid NGOs of Khulna are donor based organisations. If the donors stop providing funds or the project duration is over, all the dynamism will come to an end. Perhaps this is the top most weakness of the legal aid NGOs in Khulna as well as in entire Bangladesh. Sometimes problems are created due to some strict principles or rules of the NGOs. Such as, some NGOs have prepared some fixed rules for some specific grounds which may not be applicable for all the situations. However, the limitations of the legal aid providing NGOs of Khulna are discussed below:

II. DONOR BASED ACTIVITY

One of the main limitations of the legal aid NGOs of Khulna is that their operations are donor based. They are dependent on foreign sources for fund. These NGOs have neither own fund nor any other internal sources for implementation of non-profit projects like legal aid services. Donor agencies, international NGOs, development partners, multinational organizations provide funds to the NGOs for implementation of various projects or scheme especially in education, health legal aid, human rights and women empowerment issues¹. If the donors don't provide any fund for legal aid service in Khulna not a single NGOs will provide legal aid for a single day. No fund from the donors, no legal aid from the NGOs in Khulna or in entire country. In Khulna, some NGOs stopped their free legal assistance service due to blockage of funding by the donors at the middle of the project such as, Manobadhikar Bastobayon Songstha. When a NGO has to stop its legal assistance activities people lose their faith on the overall NGOs facilities of a

¹ 'A Mapping of Legal Aid Sector in Bangladesh' at

'<http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/docs/Projects/jsf/Legal%20Aid%20Mapping%202015.pdf>', p 41, accessed on 05.10.2024

place like Khulna. They started to think before getting NGO's help. This type of donor based funding makes the NGOs some sort of baseless and unstable organisations. But the NGOs are dynamic, proactive and interested on demand based services. No doubt, such virtues are highly essential not only for Khulna but also for our country. It's not true that all the NGOs in Khulna are poor in finance. If willing, some of them can arrange fund by themselves for providing legal aid to the poor, such as BRAC. We all know that this organisation has huge business enterprises from where they can easily arrange a better fund for our poor and helpless people. But they don't do it. They also rely on the foreign donor for this purpose. It seems that NGOs are not interested to invest their own cash for providing free legal assistance to the poor and destitute. Sometimes donors have their own choice of people and nature of service. It may lead to deprivation of the really disadvantaged people from their needs. For example, donors strongly recommended for providing legal aid to the slum dwellers of Khulna. But the concerned NGO feels for the remote people of Khulna because other NGOs are working on legal aid for the slum dwellers of Khulna. What will be the result in this case? No doubt NGOs are indispensable part in the development sector in our country. Then how can this 'Donor Base' problem be solved? In this case, the government and NGOs can negotiate with the donors for developing the situation so that donors don't stop funding in the middle of the project. Moreover the solvent NGOs should raise and allot some handsome funds for free legal aid service to our poor and vulnerable masses.

III. LIMITED LITIGATIONS

This is another major limitation of the legal aid NGOs of Khulna. Actually this problem exists in all the legal aid NGOs of entire country. The NGOs are directed by their local or foreign authorities to accept and file a limited or fixed number of cases or suits in the local courts in every year. The reason is that, funds are limited and they are also distributed among all the branches of those NGOs the entire country. What will happen when a poor justice seeker will come to such a NGO of Khulna when it has crossed its limit of accepting cases like this for this year? All the giant legal aid NGOs of Khulna such as BRAC, BLAST, BNWLA etc. have this limitation. Most of the time, they send those legal aid seekers to the government legal aid office of Khulna because they don't have such limitation. Some NGOs have other type of limitations. Such as, BNWLA provides legal aid only to the women. Their panel lawyers are also women. This is not a bad policy or prohibited in our country. But question is, doesn't the male person have the right to receive free legal assistance or can't a male advocate be enlisted in a female organisation? May be some male could receive legal aid and had his justice from BNWLA if it had opened its door for them. Such limitations relating to number of cases and gender are actually creating obstacle in satisfying the objects of the legal aid service in Khulna. These can also lessen the faith of those poor justice seekers over the legal aid NGOs. NGOs are famous for their prompt and proactive service. Day by day, their goodwill is expanding in the entire Khulna district. People are now more interested and enthusiastic for NGO's legal assistance. But NGOs could not be able to increase their ceiling of receiving and filing cases. Limitations considering gender or other specific people for accessing to legal aid of NGOs actually violets other people's human rights. Such continuous limitation is making the NGOs little bit failure in their course of action. It was a common thought about the NGO led aid service in our country during their starting of legal aid that they are substituting to the government legal aid service because government legal aid was not available in all the districts of our country. But the situation has changed. Now it's true that where NGOs are failing to provide legal aid to the poor people they are sending them to the government legal aid office. To solve this problem is not an easy task. It would require a huge workout both national and international. Firstly, giant and solvent NGOs can allocate extra fund with the donor fund to increase the ceiling of the cases or offer the legal aid service round the year. Secondly, NGOs can create pressure over the donors to increase the fund. Thirdly, NGOs can make a strong bonding among them and build a common network so that they can find out the problems in legal aid service in Khulna and solve them jointly by distributing funds, workloads and other relevant issues among them equally. Hope this initiative will be implemented on day for the sake of the humanity.

IV. AWARENESS PROGRAM IS NOT SO EFFECTIVE

Legal aid service is a result of combined activities such as counseling, creating awareness, making ADR, conducting cases in the court in free of cost. In Khulna, awareness programs are mainly led by the NGOs. In fact, NGOs realized the necessity of awareness programs for Khulna and they are more active than the government legal aid authority in this case. NGOs are trying to create awareness among the people of the entire Khulna. But if it is observed sharply, it will be found that NGO's awareness programs are not very strong and effective. The first problem is that the NGOs are donor based and the awareness programs will be closed if the donors stop paying for this. BLAST arranges a radio program named 'Amrao Asi' in every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon from the Khulna Radio Station. But the question is

how many people listen to the state owned radio at this time? Rather people are more interested to FM Radios, different TV channels of home and abroad, internet, social medias like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram etc. So, it would be very fruitful if that radio awareness program could be arranged and telecasted through a renowned TV channel of the country. BRAC is providing legal education and training to the ultra-poor women of the rural areas for creating awareness among them. Yes, it is very essential to inform and train them. But, what the other rural people can do? Should they not know about the BRAC's or other's legal aid service? Awareness will be then completed when all the people will be fully informed about it. Other methods of creating awareness are poster, distributing leaflets, hanging banners and signboards etc. BLAST and BBNWLA uses these old systems for creating awareness among the mass people on legal aid. Problem is, these posters and leaflets are stuck up and distributed mostly among the urban areas of Khulna. Those are not so much distributed in the village areas. If reached they are very small in number. Banners and signboards are placed in the urban areas. But they are so small in number that they should not be considered as a constructive awareness program. To know the real situation about twenty (20) people of Khulna city were asked whether they know about government or non-government legal aid service. More than 70% of them told that they know nothing about it. In fact, NGO led awareness programs are running in a narrower range which is very inadequate comparing to the density of the population. To make the awareness programs successful and effective NGOs have to take such awareness initiatives which will cover each and every corner of Khulna.

V. LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE MALE AND ACCUSED

In Khulna, more than 90% legal aid seekers are poor and destitute women. In case of providing legal aid NGOs are not under any statutory obligations like the government legal aid service. That's why they follow their own strategy and philosophy in rendering legal aid in Khulna as well as in the whole Bangladesh. In Khulna it is found that some legal aid NGOs are not interested in providing legal aid to the men and some are to the accused. BBNWLA doesn't provide legal aid to the men of Khulna. When they were asked that why do they not provide legal aid to the male when their proportion is only 5%-10%? They answered that BBNWLA provides legal aid only to the women because women are mainly victimized in our country and they are still weak, uneducated and helpless. So, BBNWLA has included the women only as their subject for legal aid. Another giant NGO, BRAC does not provide free legal assistance to the accused because this is not in their official decorum. This policy is framed from their central authority. No other causes or grounds have been shown by the local legal aid authority of BRAC Khulna Office when they are asked about it. Gender does not matter in this case. Question is that how far such exclusions are lawful and ethical? It is true that more than 90% poor victims of Khulna are poor and helpless women and rest are men of different ages. Legal aid is a humanitarian approach for those who are poor and cannot avail their relevant legal costs by themselves irrespective of race, color, sex, religion etc. In a sense, excluding any type of factual legal aid seeker is violation of the norms and objects of legal aid service. In Khulna, it will not take a huge cost for the legal aid NGOs if they provide legal assistance to the men and accused. In fact, accused have the lawful right to defend himself in court of the law. If he is poor, he deserves free legal assistance either from the government or from the NGOs. NGOs which provide legal aid in Khulna should make such provisions that every poor justice seeker can come under their umbrella.

VI. WEAK IN DATA PRESERVATION

This is another limitation of the legal aid NGOs of Khulna that they don't preserve their past information regarding their legal aid service in a proper or strictly systematic way. Since those old or previous data are not very important to those NGOs they preserve them in a very common and general way, not very cautiously and carefully. In fact they don't need to preserve those old data for their running or future aid initiatives. But those data may be required for any other purpose such as research, seminars, exhibition etc. The situation is not like that they don't preserve them at all. Rather, the preservation is followed by an unworthy system. In Khulna, whenever the NGOs were asked about the data of their previous activities, they provided the concerned information partly in time and took time for providing the rest part. Most of the time, they took a long time to provide them. Among all the legal aid providing NGOs in Khulna BLAST is in the better position in caring for the past data regarding their legal aid service. They are able to provide the data in a quicker time than the others. They protect their past information in the paper made files with printed copies and put them in the corner or upper racks of the office. The BLAST Khulna office does not contain a large space. So those files kept very closely one over another. As a result, there is always a chance for those files to be destroyed. BBNWLA also preserves their previous service data but in a very short and silly way, not so elaborately. When they were asked for their last five years legal aid records, they took two or three weeks to find out and provide all the relevant information. It was found that they don't even conserve them in any file or other systems. They just put them here and

there. When necessary, they find them out as per requirement. The same episode happened in BRAC Khulna Office when they were asked about their past five years legal aid data. They took two or three months for providing that information. But the situation is that they could not be able to show any conserving system of those data. A Staff Lawyer² preserves those data in his personal diary and data for this research were collected from that diary. This is the scenario of preserving previous data of legal aid NGOs of Khulna. Data are properly preserved under the government legal aid service in Khulna. The last five years data are always available in a white marker board hang on the wall of the District Legal Aid Office Khulna so that anyone can access it. In every year NLASO publishes an overall picture of its legal aid activities. Preserving previous legal aid data is not an integral part of legal aid service neither NGO are bound to do it. No claim can be insisted against them for such lack of preservation. But it should be preserved properly for a better future performance, research like this one, seminars etc.

VII. POLITICAL THREAT & PRESSURE

Political threats and pressures are very common in almost all the sectors of our country. Sometime NGOs face this problem during their service of free legal assistance to the poor. Political pressures and threats are not found when the government legal authority renders their service. This is because, a senior judicial officer plays the main role there and the District and Session Judge holds the entire authority of it. Political parties and leaders are still not so influential over the judiciary and its officers. But the NGOs frequently face this type of ill political pressures in Khulna. Sometime they even face life threats. This happens for both the urban and rural cases. The BLAST Khulna staffs informed that they face such threats and pressures during the making of ADR because there is a matter of negotiation and compromise. Local political leaders of the concerned parties try to convince the BLAST staffs or create pressure on them so that his blessed party can be benefited in the ADR. Sometime pressures are created to accept any application seeking legal aid by someone who is actually not eligible for receiving legal aid. BNWLA staffs expressed the same experience when they were asked about it. But they informed one of their most dangerous experiences which is beyond every threat to them. BNWLA sometime investigate in the field level concerning any case come them for legal aid. Few years ago, during the investigation of a murder case, the concerned staffs were frequently receiving life threat from some very influential local groups. Receiving political and other threats and pressures are more common to the BRAC Khulna staffs than the BNWLA and BLAST Khulna staffs. Because BRAC staffs work in the deep rural areas of Khulna but the BNWLA and BLAST staffs work only in their Khulna office. BRAC has its legal aid office in every Upazilla of Khulna. ADR and other relevant events happen in those offices in a fixed day of week. Its staffs and other concerned people visit any place where any offence committed and poor people lose his rights. They stand by those people and support them by providing money, counseling, free legal support etc. Sometime the accused parties create pressure by using the political leaders or other influential over the BRAC staffs. This causes a great hamper. In fact such types of ill attitudes from the local political corners create hurdles in the smooth functioning of legal aid service and impede the spirit of such a humanitarian initiative. It also violates the rights of the poor and the vulnerable groups. Political leaders and other influential groups and people should act accordingly so that NGO legal aid service can be more functional, speedy and friendly to the poor and destitute people.

VIII. WEAK COORDINATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT

The Kyiv declaration reveals, ‘Government should establish cooperative arrangements with a wide range of stakeholders - such as non-government organisations, religious and non religious charitable organisations, professional bodies and associations and academic institutions and ensure effective public participation in the formulation of legal aid policies, programs and legislation³’. NGOs may be very useful for legal aid services in the socio economic context of Bangladesh. It could not be possible to make the legal aid service available for each and every people of the country so far though we have achieved our independence about fifty years ago. The government legal aid service is mainly district or town area based and it is not so effective outside the district. On the other hand, the legal aid providing NGO’s activities are Capital and district or town based too. That’s why they also are not able to reach the grass-root people with their legal aid service. Bangladesh is a developing country. It has financial limitations. Though the government is positively intended for the wellbeing of the people but it’s not possible to ensure all types of free legal assistance for the masses. NGOs can be involved in the legal aid activities very easily. Moreover, legal aid can be added as a new content with the ongoing activities of the NGOs. In this case different NGOs can perform different roles.

² Shankar Roy Chowdhury, Staff Lawyer, Human Rights and Legal Aid Services, BRAC Khulna

³ Declaration No: 5, The Kyiv Declaration on the Right to Legal Aid, (27-30 March, 2007), Kyiv, Ukraine

Such as, Some NGOs can provide direct legal aid in the court, some can create awareness among the mass people, some can provide legal aid related information, some others can provide legal education to the poor and vulnerable people of the country and others can provide free legal counseling as paralegals. If we can attach the NGOs with the government legal aid activities in planned way, the area and scope of legal aid activities will be more extended. For this reason, the coordination and combination between the GO and NGO legal aid providers are deeply essential⁴. No doubt, this coordination is also essential in Khulna. It's not true that there is no coordination among the GO and NGO legal aid providers in Khulna. But the area of this coordination and help is very narrow. Such as, the District Legal Aid Office Khulna sometimes take helps from the legal aid NGOs of Khulna in arranging rallies, seminar's, fairs on legal aid in different places of Khulna due to the shortage of the man power of GO legal aid service. On the other hand, NGOs of Khulna, who don't provide legal aid or whose ceiling has been fulfilled sends the poor legal aid seekers to government legal aid office so that they can have justice because GO legal aid doesn't have the financial ceiling. But such cooperation can be extended to more effective grounds. We came to know that NGO's legal aid services are priority and target based. They can discuss their research matters with the government legal aid office of Khulna. A joint venture fund can be created to implement those priority based legal aid projects. As the GO has the lack of manpower, it can use NGOs network for creating awareness in the grass-root level. These are actually very few grounds of coordination. More new and dynamic grounds can be found out and implemented if some sacrifice and cooperative mentality is grown up for the sake of the greater humanity in this region. More vulnerable and destitute people will be able to live a righteous life, as a result.

IX. LACK OF MANPOWER

Though the NGOs have more man power than the government legal aid service in Khulna but they are insufficient comparing to their projects and working areas. Due to the limitation and shortage of funds, NGOs have to arrange their staffs very carefully because the remunerations and other financial facilities are provided from that donor's funding. NGOs don't get enough funding to appoint full set of staffs for a specific project. So, they cannot appoint such number of staffs which are actually necessary for their projects. A single staff actually performs multi tasks which should be accumulated by two or more people. BLAST Khulna contains only eight (8) staffs which is very low comparing to their volume of work load. In this situation, it has assigned one of its permanent staffs⁵ for IRSOP⁶ Project. The Coordinator⁷ of BLAST Khulna Unit informed if three or four more staffs can be appointed here, the legal aid service could be rendered more effectively. When the number of legal aid seeker increases, it becomes tough to manage them with the present manpower. Sometimes people misunderstand them which lead to lose faith upon BLAST's service. BNWLA has only four staffs in its Khulna office. It contained some more staffs but due to shortage of funds it had to relieve them from their jobs. But it is continuing its legal aid service with this less manpower. BRAC is in the same situation in Khulna. In fact they are facing more manpower trouble than BNWLA and BLAST. The working of BRAC is huge extended than the other two NGOs in Khulna. BNWLA and BLAST works only in the city area. Except in the city, there is no other office of them in the District. But BRAC has its legal aid office in all the nine (9) Upazillas of Khulna. Every Upazilla is comprised of at least seven to ten villages. In each Upazilla only one staff has been appointed by BRAC for legal aid purpose. It means one legal aid activist for the people of seven to ten villages. How far this is justified? Isn't it a comedy? As usually, the legal assistance and other related programs are hampered for this low manpower. It's not possible for those BRAC staffs to visit two or three separate places in different villages. They are advised to visit poor victim's houses and places of crimes if necessary. People are also not getting the expected service from BRAC. A staff⁸ lawyer, who is actually coordinating these nine Upazilla legal staffs, told the researcher that at least two or three staffs should be appointed in each Upazilla for the smooth functioning of the legal aid services projected by BRAC. This is how, the NGOs led legal aid activity is going on in Khulna with such weak manpower. It is a common complaint that donors pay the actual amount but some local stake holders decrease the amount. Such things should be stopped. Donors, local or foreign stake holders or other influential parties have to act accordingly so that the

⁴Uddin, Md. Jasim, 'Aingoto Shohayota Babostha : Bangladesh O Antorjatik Prekhhit', Manusher Jonno Foundation, Dhaka, 2015, p 172

⁵ Adv. Farhana Yeasmin Sheuli, Staff Lawyer, BLAST Khulna Unit

⁶'Improvement of the Real Situation of over Crowding in Prison', a project of Germany Government implemented by the Home Ministry and Central Jail Authority of Bangladesh.

⁷ Adv. Ashok Kumar Shaha, Coordinator, BLAST Khulna Unit

⁸ Shankar Roy Chowdhury, Staff Lawyer, Human Rights and Legal Aid Services, BRAC Khulna

indigent people can get their justice easily and smoothly. The Dias and the audience are pretty ready, just the writer has to present a sweet and fair play.

X. INSUFFICIENT FUND & COMPLEX PROCEDURE TO USE IT

From the above mentioned discussion it is clear to us that the funding behind the NGO led legal aid service is very low and insufficient. With this drawback, another limitation is very common in Khulna. This fund is allocated by the central authorities of those legal aid providing NGOs and used by the local offices. To use this fund, local authorities have to face a very complex procedure. For BLAST, the account is maintained in a state oriented bank and if any amount is needed to be debited it requires two People's signature, one from the local coordinator of BLAST and another from the Chairman or Secretary of the local Managing Committee. It is to be noted here that fund is strictly limited for every single initiative such as court cases, ADR, counseling, fee for the lawyers, conveyance for the clients and their witnesses etc. Sometime it is found that the Chairman or Secretary who is actually an advocate is very busy with their professional activities and not able to put his signature in right time. It hampers the service of BLAST. The payments of the panel lawyers, clients, and concerned witnesses are delayed due to such late signature. Such problems would not reveal it the fund can be arranged with signatures of two permanent staffs of BLAST because they are always available in the office. BRAC faces the same problem for issuing cheques and payment to the concerned lawyers, parties, victims and others. In BRAC two or three people's counter signatures are also required for issuing a cheque which sometime causes the same problems like BLAST. BRAC provides TK 1000/= to any such victim who actually needs it for treatment purpose. No doubt, this amount is very nominal and it should be increased in a standard amount comparing to the present medical costs. Problem is that to collect that tiny amount from the office fund is a hard job and very complex one. In this at least two signatures are required to grant that amount and most of the time it costs a long time. Sometime BRAC rehabilitates the ultra-poor form its 'Ultra Poor Fund' by providing cows, goats and liquid money which is also issued through a complex procedure. The demand of the local staffs of the BRAC is that the amount should be increased to a standard quantity and the procedure should be easier that it could be received in a hurry. It would help continue the faith of the poor masses on NGO's activities especially on BRAC.

XI. DON'T HAVE OWN SHELTER HOME

To have a shelter home is not mandatory for a legal aid NGO and it is not an integral part of the legal aid service. But sometimes, due to the nature of the work of some NGOs shelter homes become necessary. If any NGO can arrange for a shelter home, it will place that organisation to an unexpected height. In Khulna none of the legal aid NGOs has any shelter home of its own. Problem arises from another point also. BNWLA works for the trafficked women. When trafficked women are rescued from home or abroad, they bring them and send them to the local shelter home of the 'National Women Association' of Khulna. Those girls can stay there for six months and have food and clothes free of cost. By this time, BNWLA provides them necessary legal assistance and communicate with their families and send them to their families. Sometime BRAC also takes the opportunity of that local shelter home of the government. It sends those women victims who don't have any means to live to this shelter home so that those destitute women can live at least for six months. In fact these types of women victims are very poor in number in Khulna. So it is not too necessary to prioritize and consider them under the NGO led legal aid service in Khulna. But we are in the 21st century and the question is about sufficiency and effectively ensuring everyone's access to justice and other relevant facilities. If the legal aid providing NGOs can arrange their own shelter homes, it will prove the best accomplishment of the legal aid objects in Khulna. In this case, local NGOs of Khulna can jointly prepare a shelter home where they will send their clients and bear all the expenses mutually. Prediction says, it will set an unparalleled example of internal coordination of the NGOs in the whole country.

XII. ADR IS NOT PRACTICED BY ALL THE NGOS

The term 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' or 'ADR' is often used to describe a wide variety of dispute resolution mechanisms that are short of, or alternative to, full-scale processes. The term can refer to everything from facilitated settlement negotiations, in which disputants are encouraged to negotiate directly with each other prior to some other legal process, to arbitration systems that look and feel very much like a courtroom process. Processes designed to manage community tension or facilitate community development which can also be included as an issue within the

rubric of ADR⁹. It is actually an informal dispute resolution process in which the parties meet with a professional third party who helps them in resolving their disputes in a way that is less formal and often more consensual than is done in the courts¹⁰. An ancient Greek adage, 'Nobody wins a case. One party may get a goat instead of a cow but another gets nothing at all' regarding court cases is still available. This is very true in case of Bangladesh. It's too much costly, lengthy and formal to resolve in case under the present judicial system. Because every stage of a case is abide by law. As a result, it's getting to much late to determine a case or a suit through our judicial system. It's creating mental pressure on the concerned parties and making them penniless. But a case or suit can be resolved through discussion and mutual settlement among the concerned parties to a case except judicial trial. This mutual settlement among the parties is called ADR. Since most of the legal aid seekers are uneducated and ultra-poor, a long and complex judicial process may tire them and make them feel to leave the hope of justice. That why NGOs in Bangladesh as well as in Khulna started practicing ADR in resolving the disputes within a short time of the indigent justice seekers. It is found very effective in Khulna. But a limitation is created that all the NGOs are not using this tool to relieve the pain of the poor justice seekers. Such as, BNWLA is not conducting ADR in Khulna. The reason behind this is not transparent. May be, due to shortage of staffs or central policy is the reason behind this. BNWLA Khulna Unit provides legal aid only to the women and children. No doubt, women and child victims should get their justice in a hurry which can be ensured by ADR easily. BNWLA can try ADR for uplifting the human rights of the poor and vulnerable women and children of Khulna. May be it will be little tough for them but they can start conducting ADR by their present manpower or they can convince their superior authorities to change any obstacle in this regard if there is any. Hope they will take necessary steps in a hurry. Otherwise the modern legal aid service may lose its beauty.

XIII. SPECIALISED PROJECT ITSELF IS A LIMITATION

Though legal aid NGOs design and implement projects on the basis of priority demand for legal aid from different communities of our society but in a sharp sense those projects is one kind of limitation for the legal aid providing NGOs in Khulna or anywhere in Bangladesh. The project related limitations are concerned with its duration, targeted people and area, available facilities etc. Let us think that a two years legal aid project is launched for creating awareness on legal aid among the High School and College students of Khulna district by a legal aid providing NGO of Khulna. After completion of the two years the project was extended for one year more. After that one year the project was closed as the duration is fulfilled. The question is what will be the situation if all the schools and colleges are not covered by this time and how the rest of the students will be informed about the legal aid service in Khulna either by the government or by the non-government organisations? Another example may be that an NGO planned a project for providing free legal counsel to the widow of two villages of a Union of Khulna District. That Union is comprised of six villages. Now what the widows of the other four villages of that Union will do? If a widow from any of those four villages seeks for legal aid under that project how will she be treated? A good answer may be that these are pilot or test projects for greater interest. So such questions should not be raised regarding those projects. Problem is that, an NGOs does not run only one project of legal aid. Most of the time it continues the general legal aid service concurrently with specialised project. So why such a specialised projects initiated? Format should be like that any specific program will continue until it's object is fulfilled or the entire fund can be amalgamated with the regular fund for providing free legal counseling to all the eligible people for legal aid. In fact, specialized projects should not be encourages. Rather, measures should be taken that all eligible people can be closely connected with the general legal aid service.

XIV. DON'T HAVE PERMANENT OFFICE AND STAFF

None of the legal aid providing NGOs of Khulna has its own offices or establishments. They all use the rented house for their purposes. Sometime it seems as a soft limitation. It's clear that they don't purchase any immovable property due to the lack of fund and policy of their of their central authority. Since the offices are rented, at any time it can be changed or shifted to another address. As a result, the poor justice seekers who actually come from different rural areas of Khulna will face the problem of finding and reaching that office. May be they will get the new office but it will cost some time and sufferings. NGOs try to rent the office in a cheap rate. So sometime they arrange their offices in the inner side of the city, where it will not easy to reach. This temporary housing has created a great difference between

⁹ Alternative Dispute Resolution Practitioner's Guide, 'What is ADR?', Washington, D.C. Technical Publications Series, March, 1998

¹⁰ Uddin, Md. Jasim, 'Aingoto Shohayota Babostha : Bangladesh O Antorjatik Prekhhit', Manusher Jonno Foundation, Dhaka, 2015, p 149

the GO and NGO legal aid service. It has marked the government legal aid service as a permanent one and the NGO aid as a temporary one. If any legal aid providing NGO can arrange its own office space in Khulna definitely it will bring a drastic change in its activity. Then that NGO can think permanently about its service of legal aid. Their clients will more rely on them. Own establishment of the legal aid NGOs will make the service more effective and fruitful in Khulna. In other words, it may help in serving the humanity. Not only stable offices are required but also permanent staffs are required in those NGOs. Face value is very important in serving free legal assistance to the poor and destitute. If the staffs are frequently changed, poor justice seekers will feel uneasy to communicate with them, because they are not so expert in frequently adjusting with new people and environments. However, these are also soft limitations which actually don't influence the legal aid service too badly. If these limitations can be removed or minimized, legal aid service will find its destination very smoothly in Khulna.

XV. LACK OF COORDINATION AMONG THE NGOS

Another limitation of the NGO led legal aid service in Khulna is that don't have strong internal coordination among them. Every NGO has its own plan and principle for providing legal aid to the poor and destitute people. Such as BNWLA is providing legal only to the women and children, BLAST is implementing special projects on the children and old prisoners and BRAC is providing legal education and training to the ultra-poor women and different officers and public representatives of the Union, Upazilla and District level. All these they are doing besides providing their regular legal aid service. They are spending their funds, efforts, times and efficiencies to these activities in a scattered way. Such scattered movement of those NGOs are creating a great gap in the legal aid service and also missing a better chance to do something great in that field. We know that NGOs provide their legal aid services on the basis of demand and priority of any specific area. No doubt, NGOs are spending a huge fund in the legal aid service in Khulna. For such scattered dissemination of legal aid people who are out of their services areas and criteria cannot get aid or legal help. If the legal aid providing NGOs get together for the greater interest of the indigent people of this area, find the demands of legal aid on priority basis and set them as common goals, make a common fund by accumulating their own institutional funds and spend them together to reach their common goal. People will be highly benefited in this and NGO led legal aid service will be more fruitful. The situation is not so that there is no coordination among the legal aid NGOs of Khulna but they are very small and narrow in scale. They are limited in sharing information, jointly arranging seminar, sending poor justice seekers to any NGO etc. The legal aid NGOs are working on the same goal, for ensuring the justice of the poor and saving their rights. In this case, it will not be an impossible task for them to unite themselves and work together to ensure free legal assistance for all the people irrespective of race, sex, color, religion etc.

XVI. CONCLUSION

Vulnerable people are always in want of various types of livelihood and support in our country. Free legal help may not be a direct or crying need but an indirect need indeed. The fact is, only expert people can fulfill this demand as it is exclusively professional in nature. As said earlier, NGOs emphasize on the social condition and real need of the legal aid seekers and on the basis of it they design their legal aid projects and schemes. As a result, destitute people find the NGOs as strong supportive hand by them. Due to this, NGOs have become an indispensable part of legal aid service in Khulna. If we analyse the above mentioned limitations of NGOs, it will be proved that most of the limitations are the result of the will of the donors or planning of the NGOs. Limitations such as not having institutional safe home, specific number of cases, legal aid for specific gender etc. cannot be solved because the donors have fixed those criteria. But, other limitations such as cooperation with the government, preserving case history and relevant data, using ADR in solving more legal problems can be easily executed. Day by day, NGOs are becoming more careful in removing their limitations as the number of legal aid seekers are increasing to a great proportion.

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INTEGRATED AUTONOMOUS BOT FOR MILITARY SURVEILLANCE AND LANDMINE DETECTION USING GPS LOCALIZATION

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ABSTRACT: The increasing need for effective surveillance and landmine detection in military operations necessitates the development of advanced autonomous systems. This paper presents an integrated autonomous bot designed for military surveillance and landmine detection, equipped with GPS localization and robotic disposal capabilities. The bot utilizes advanced sensors and algorithms for real-time data acquisition and analysis, enabling precise identification of landmines and threats in various terrains. GPS localization ensures accurate positioning, facilitating efficient navigation and operation in complex environments. Furthermore, the robotic disposal system enhances safety by enabling the neutralization of detected landmines from a safe distance. This integrated approach not only improves operational efficiency but also significantly reduces the risks to personnel. The results of field tests demonstrate the bot's effectiveness, reliability, and potential for enhancing military readiness and safety in mine-affected areas.

KEY WORDS: Autonomous bot, Military Surveillance, Landmine detection, GPS Localization, Robotic disposal, Real-time data acquisition, Autonomous navigation, Terrain adaptability

I.INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of the project is to design and develop an integrated autonomous bot capable of performing military surveillance, detecting landmines, and executing robotic disposal with GPS localization. The bot aims to

enhance the efficiency and safety of military operations by automating crucial and dangerous tasks such as monitoring hostile areas, identifying hidden landmines, and neutralizing explosive devices. By integrating advanced sensor technology, GPS systems, and autonomous robotics, this project seeks to reduce the risk to human personnel in combat zones and dangerous terrains while improving the accuracy and reliability of military reconnaissance missions. The bot is intended to operate independently or under minimal human supervision, ensuring real-time surveillance data and safe detection of landmines.

This project is driven by the need for increased safety, precision, and automation in modern military operations. The ultimate goal is to minimize human casualties and improve operational outcomes during high-risk missions. The bot will function as a multipurpose tool, combining intelligence gathering, threat detection, and physical intervention, all within a single integrated system.

The "Integrated Autonomous Bot for Military Surveillance and Landmine Detection with GPS Localization and Robotic Disposal" project is a cutting-edge initiative aimed at developing an advanced robotic system for military use. The bot is designed to perform three key functions: surveillance of military zones, detection of hidden landmines, and safe disposal of detected explosives. The system leverages a combination of autonomous navigation, real-time video surveillance, GPS-based positioning, and sensor-driven landmine detection technologies. This project focuses on building a bot that can autonomously navigate rugged or hazardous terrains while transmitting live surveillance data back to command centers. Using thermal cameras, night-vision optics, and motion sensors, the bot can conduct around-the-clock monitoring of military zones, borders, or conflict areas. Furthermore, it is equipped with advanced ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and metal detection systems to identify and locate landmines buried underground. Upon identifying a landmine, the bot can either mark the location with precision GPS coordinates or proceed to perform an automated neutralization or disposal process. The robotic arm attached to the bot will be designed to manipulate tools for safely disarming or removing the explosive threat, minimizing the need for human intervention. The bot will be built with rugged materials to withstand harsh environmental conditions and will incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) for autonomous decision-making, obstacle avoidance, and task optimization.

This project integrates state-of-the-art technologies in robotics, artificial intelligence, and military-grade sensors to create a robust, efficient, and autonomous solution for enhancing military safety and efficiency. The scope of this project includes the complete design, development, and testing of the autonomous bot system. Key elements covered within the scope are the creation of a functional robotic prototype capable of navigating a variety of terrains, performing continuous surveillance, detecting landmines, and autonomously neutralizing threats. The project will involve the integration of multiple hardware components, including high-resolution cameras, GPS modules, GPR systems, robotic arms, and sophisticated sensors for mine detection and environmental scanning.

The software aspect will involve developing an AI-based control system for autonomous navigation, threat detection, and decision-making. The bot will be capable of learning from its environment and making real-time decisions to avoid obstacles, identify mines, and execute disposal mechanisms. Additionally, the bot's GPS localization feature will ensure precise location tracking and reporting, enabling the bot to accurately document.

This project will also explore the user interface aspect, allowing military personnel to monitor and control the bot remotely via a secure communication system. While the bot is primarily designed for autonomous operation, there will be provisions for manual override in critical situations. The final phase of the project will include rigorous field testing in simulated combat and minefield environments to ensure the bot's reliability and performance under real-world conditions. The project's scope extends to potential future enhancements, such as equipping the bot with additional features like drone integration for aerial support, AI-powered threat assessment, and real-time communication with other military assets. The scalability of the system allows for its deployment across various military applications, from battlefield surveillance to peacekeeping operations and post-conflict de-mining missions.

II.METHODOLOGY

Existing System: The current systems used for military surveillance, landmine detection, and disposal are often fragmented, labor-intensive, and involve significant risks to human personnel. For surveillance, conventional systems involve human patrols, manned aircraft, or stationary cameras, each of which has limitations such as vulnerability to enemy fire, limited coverage, or dependence on human operators. For landmine detection, existing systems primarily rely on handheld metal detectors, sniffer dogs, and manually operated robots. These approaches are either time-consuming or risky, as they require human proximity to hazardous areas. Manually operated robots, while effective in some cases, often require direct human control and cannot function autonomously.

In terms of landmine disposal, bomb disposal teams still face significant risks when approaching and neutralizing explosives. Robotic solutions exist, but most are tele-operated, meaning that human intervention is required throughout the process, which may expose operators to danger in the event of miscommunication, device failure, or sudden environmental changes

Proposed System: The proposed system aims to address the limitations of existing technologies by integrating multiple functions—surveillance, landmine detection, and robotic disposal—into a single, autonomous bot. Unlike current systems, the proposed solution is designed to operate independently with minimal human supervision, significantly reducing the risk to military personnel.

Key aspects of the proposed system include:

-Autonomous Navigation: The bot will be equipped with AI algorithms and GPS localization systems that allow it to navigate complex terrains without human control. It can patrol assigned areas, detect obstacles, and make real-time decisions to avoid hazards, ensuring seamless surveillance and mine detection operations.

-Integrated Surveillance and Detection: The bot will utilize advanced cameras (thermal, infrared, and night-vision), motion sensors, and ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to perform continuous surveillance and landmine detection simultaneously. This eliminates the need for separate systems, allowing for more efficient and cohesive operations.

-Robotic Disposal: Once a landmine or explosive device is detected, the bot can either flag the location with GPS precision or utilize its robotic arm to neutralize or safely dispose of the device. The bot's AI system will allow it to assess the best disposal methods autonomously, reducing the need for direct human intervention in dangerous environments.

-Real-Time Communication and Reporting: The bot will be equipped with a communication system that transmits real-time data and coordinates back to a central command, ensuring that decision-makers have up-to-date information on threats, mine locations, and surveillance footage.

-Autonomous Multi-Functionality: The bot can autonomously perform multiple tasks, including surveillance, mine detection, and disposal, with minimal human input. This integration of functions improves efficiency and reduces the need for multiple devices.

-Advanced Sensing Technology: Equipped with thermal cameras, infrared optics, motion sensors, and ground-penetrating radar, the bot provides comprehensive surveillance and accurate landmine detection even in challenging conditions, such as low visibility or rough terrain.

-Robotic Arm for Disposal: The bot is fitted with a sophisticated robotic arm capable of manipulating tools for safe and precise neutralization or removal of landmines and other explosive devices.

-GPS Localization: The bot is equipped with a GPS module to provide real-time location tracking. This allows for precise mapping of minefields and ensures that the bot can accurately report the positions of detected threats.

-AI-Powered Decision-Making: The bot uses artificial intelligence to autonomously navigate, detect obstacles, identify threats, and choose the best course of action for landmine disposal. The AI system enables the bot to adapt to different environments and make real-time decisions without human intervention.

-Rugged Design for Harsh Environments: The bot is designed to withstand the harsh conditions of military battlefields, including extreme temperatures, rugged terrains, and exposure to explosive shockwaves. This ensures operational reliability even in the most challenging environments.

-Real-Time Communication: The bot can transmit data and coordinates in real time, ensuring that mission commanders receive live updates on the bot's status, threat locations, and surveillance findings.

One of the primary uses of the autonomous bot is real-time military surveillance. Equipped with high-definition cameras, thermal sensors, and motion detection systems, the bot can conduct continuous monitoring of enemy territories, borders, or conflict zones. Its autonomous navigation enables it to patrol predefined areas or respond dynamically to threats detected in its vicinity. Some of the critical surveillance applications include:

- **Monitoring Borders and Sensitive Areas:** The bot can autonomously patrol national borders, military camps, or other restricted zones. Using AI-based image processing, it can identify unusual activity, unauthorized movement, or potential threats in real time, transmitting this data to command centers for immediate action.
- **Gathering Intelligence in Conflict Zones:** The bot is especially useful in dangerous or inaccessible environments where human surveillance is too risky. By deploying this autonomous system, the military can gather intelligence on enemy positions, troop movements, or infrastructure without risking the lives of soldiers.
- **Night-Time and Low Visibility Surveillance:** Equipped with night-vision and infrared cameras, the bot can perform surveillance in low-visibility conditions, such as night operations or during inclement weather. This ensures uninterrupted monitoring capabilities in all environments.

Landmines are a persistent danger in many conflict and post-conflict regions around the world. The integrated bot is designed to autonomously detect, map, and mark landmines using advanced sensor technology such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR), metal detectors, and electromagnetic sensors. The bot provides a safer, faster, and more reliable alternative to traditional landmine detection methods, which often require human personnel or animals. Key use cases include:

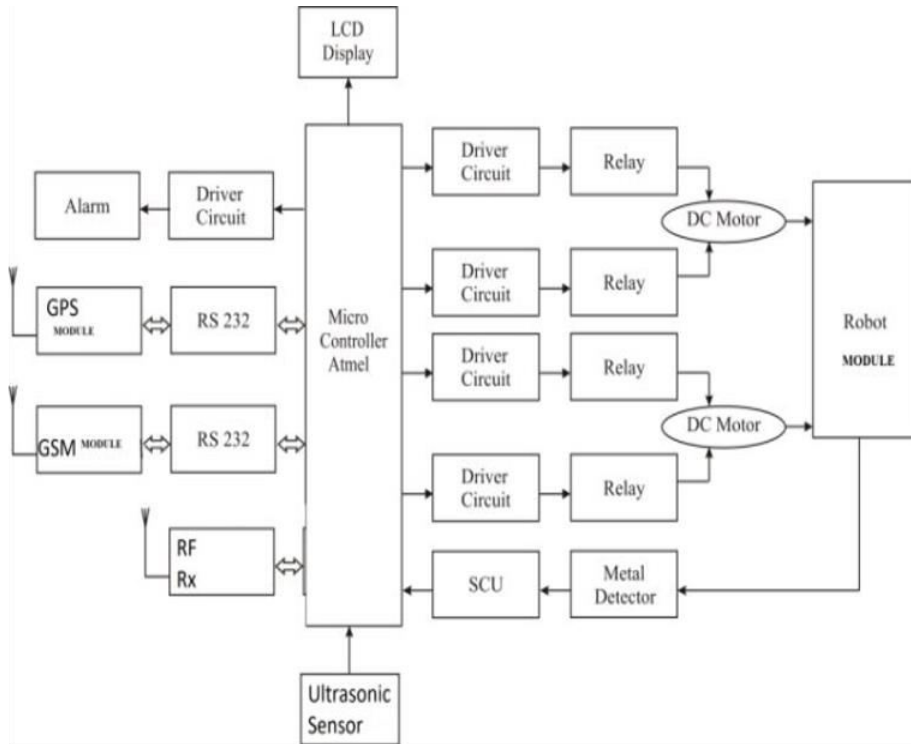
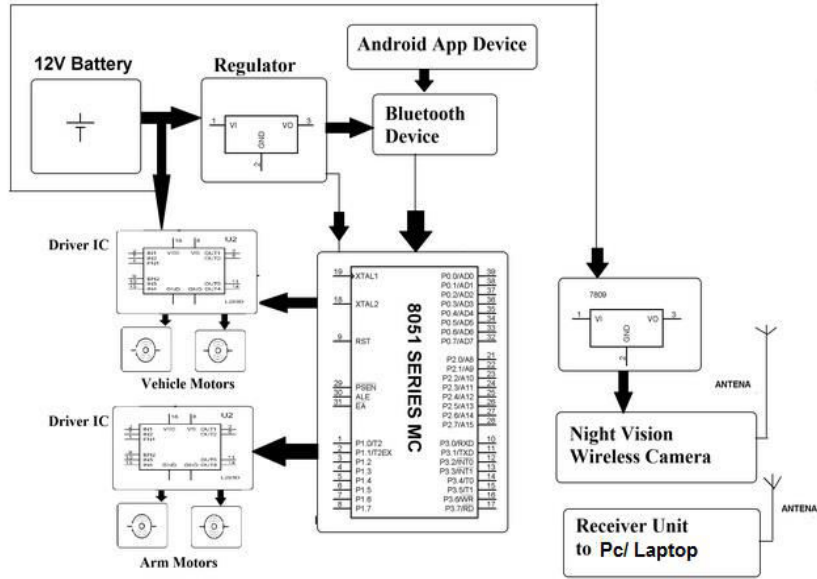
- **Clearing Land for Military Operations:** In active combat zones, the bot can be deployed ahead of troops to clear paths through minefields or detect hidden explosives. This ensures that military personnel can move freely without the threat of landmines, reducing casualties and improving mission success rates.
- **Post-Conflict De-Mining Missions:** The bot is also suitable for humanitarian missions in post-conflict zones, where landmines remain a significant hazard to civilians. By autonomously scanning and mapping areas for mines, the bot can make previously hazardous land safe for civilian use, agriculture, or reconstruction efforts.
- **Marking Detected Mines with GPS:** Once a landmine is detected, the bot can precisely log its location using GPS. This allows demining teams to remotely track mine locations and either avoid the area or send a dedicated disposal team to neutralize the threat.

In addition to detection, the bot is equipped with a robotic arm capable of handling explosive devices autonomously. This feature makes the bot an invaluable tool for bomb disposal units, allowing for the neutralization of landmines,

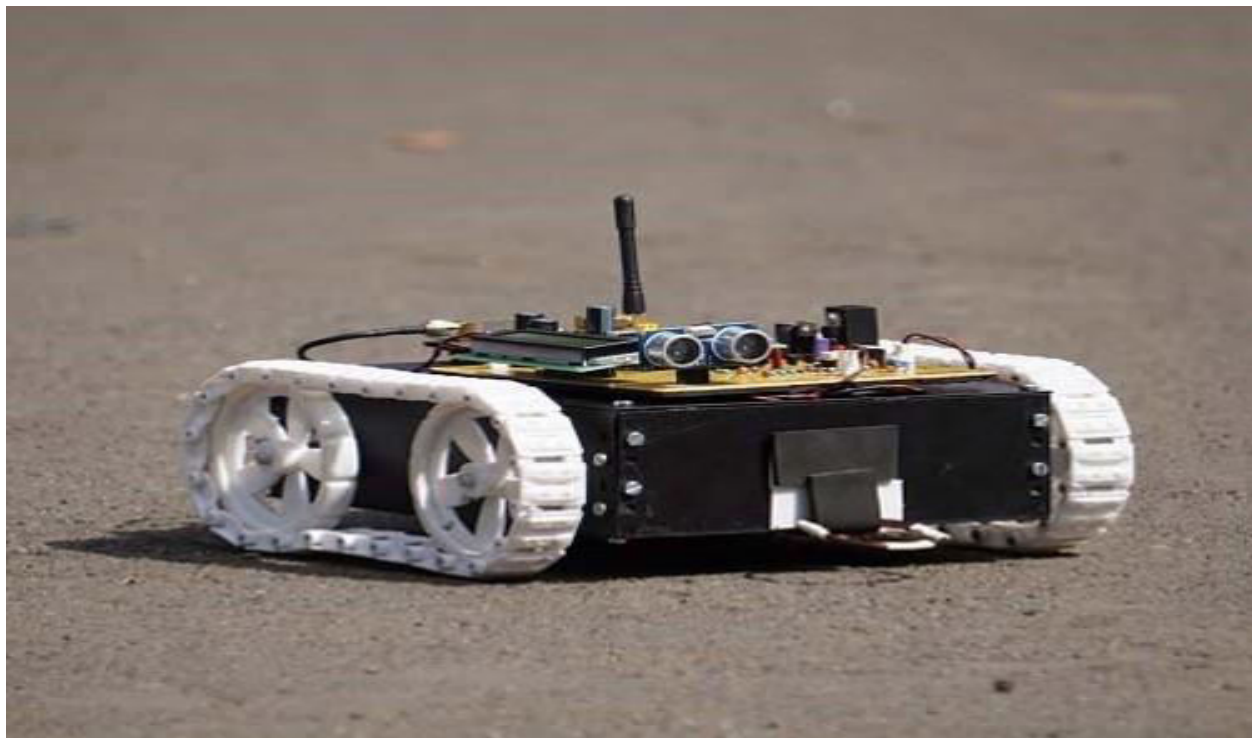
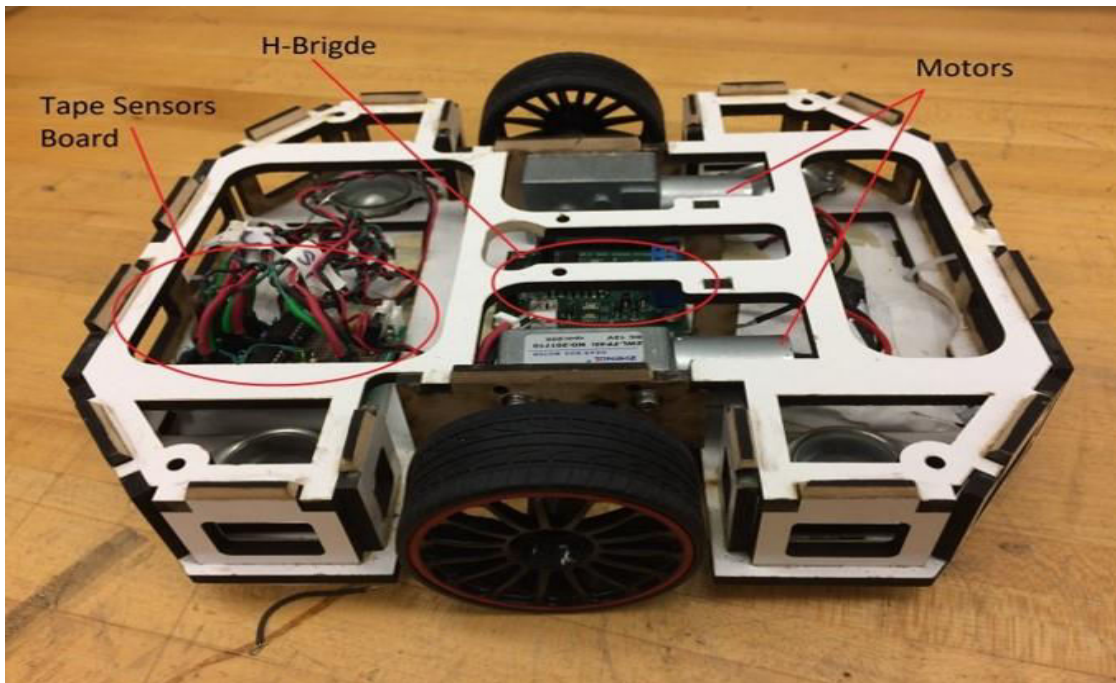
improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and other hazards with minimal human intervention. The bot can be used in the following scenarios:

- **Safe Disposal of Landmines:** Upon detecting a landmine, the bot can either mark its location for later disposal or proceed to safely neutralize it using its robotic arm and onboard tools. This capability significantly reduces the time and risk involved in traditional demining operations.
- **Counter-IED Operations:** In urban conflict zones, IEDs pose a significant risk to both military personnel and civilians. The bot's detection systems, combined with its disposal arm, allow it to safely approach, defuse, or remove IEDs without requiring human bomb disposal experts to enter the danger zone.
- **Hazardous Material Removal:** Beyond explosives, the bot can be utilized to handle other dangerous materials such as chemical or radioactive devices that may be encountered in military or terrorist situations. Its robotic arm, coupled with precise control systems, enables the safe removal of such threats.

III.BLOCK DIAGRAM



IV.PROTOTYPE



V.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The field tests conducted with the integrated autonomous bot for military surveillance and landmine detection demonstrated promising results across a variety of terrains and operational scenarios. The bot, equipped with GPS

localization and advanced sensors, was able to efficiently identify and localize landmines with high accuracy. The GPS system provided precise positioning data, allowing the bot to navigate complex and potentially hazardous environments effectively. This capability is critical in military operations where precise localization can reduce risk and ensure safer routes for personnel and equipment.

During the tests, the bot's advanced threat detection algorithms successfully distinguished between landmines and non-threatening objects in real-time, significantly reducing false-positive rates. This improved detection accuracy not only enhances mission efficiency but also conserves resources by minimizing unnecessary stops or diversions. The real-time data acquisition and analysis allowed for continuous situational awareness, a feature essential for dynamic battlefield environments.

In addition, the robotic disposal mechanism showed high reliability and safety in neutralizing detected landmines from a safe distance, reducing the need for direct human intervention. This system minimized the exposure of military personnel to dangerous situations, thereby enhancing overall mission safety. The disposal process was automated to a degree that enabled efficient and quick responses to detected threats, further increasing the bot's operational speed and utility.

Moreover, the bot's terrain adaptability was demonstrated through its ability to navigate uneven and varied landscapes without significant delays or operational issues. The adaptability to different terrains underscores the bot's versatility in diverse military settings, from desert landscapes to forested areas. This capability is essential in real-world military applications where terrain conditions are often unpredictable.

Discussion

The results suggest that integrating autonomous systems like this bot into military operations can significantly enhance surveillance and landmine detection efficiency, contributing to operational success and safety. The use of GPS localization coupled with real-time data processing proved to be a reliable framework for precise navigation and threat identification. The reduced false-positive rate in landmine detection also speaks to the robustness of the bot's algorithms, which could potentially be further enhanced with machine learning techniques for continuous improvement based on new data inputs.

Overall, the integrated bot system demonstrates a valuable application for autonomous technologies in military operations. With continued refinement, it holds potential not only for enhancing landmine detection and disposal but also for broader surveillance applications in complex and high-risk areas, marking a significant advancement in autonomous military systems.

VI.CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The development of the integrated autonomous bot for military surveillance and landmine detection represents a significant advancement in addressing the challenges posed by unexploded ordnance and the need for effective reconnaissance in hazardous environments. The bot's capability to autonomously navigate, accurately detect landmines, and dispose of them safely underscores its potential to enhance operational efficiency and protect military personnel. Field tests have validated its effectiveness, demonstrating reliable performance across various terrains and conditions. As military operations increasingly prioritize safety and precision, this autonomous solution offers a proactive approach to mitigating the risks associated with landmines and improving situational awareness.

Future research will focus on several key areas to enhance the bot's capabilities. Firstly, improvements in sensor technology and data processing algorithms will aim to increase detection accuracy and reduce false positives. Additionally, incorporating machine learning techniques could enable the bot to adapt and learn from diverse operational environments, improving its decision-making processes. Expanding the bot's mobility through advanced robotics and exploration technologies will allow for better navigation in challenging terrains. Furthermore, collaboration with human operators via intuitive interfaces will enhance situational awareness and decision-making. Finally, exploring integration with other military systems, such as drones or command centers, could provide comprehensive.

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