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PHOTO: AFP

Love for the country

The letters of Arafat Nadim and Faruque Hasan published in your 12 December issue drew my attention. The writers raised the question of love for one's country which is rare among our politicians and leaders alike. However, this sickness has now filtered dangerously into the younger generations and articulated publicly by their support of cricket teams other than their own.

Asking the government to remain alert against such persons and monitor their activities is farcical, simply because of the Tipaimukh dam mockery, border killings, and transit farce, to name a few. The lack of love for the country by successive governments is pathetically reflected through the pages of our dailies.

The question of espionage is also a joke. When a Bangladeshi sets fire to a costly railway carriage, we term it as an outburst of rage, not realising that the person is doing no less harm to the country than an unpatriotic spy. The younger generation needs to love every sand-grain of Bangladesh.

Mahmoodul Haque

Gulshan, Dhaka

"Australian faces lashes and jail term for blasphemy in Saudi Arabia"

The above news has drawn my attention. Mansor Almaribe, a 45-year-old Australian, has been sentenced to 500 lashes and a year in prison after being convicted of blasphemy by judges in Saudi Arabia. Mansor went to the country for a pilgrimage to Mecca. It is reported that the judge initially handed down a sentence of two years in jail and 500 lashes, but later reduced the jail term to one year. Officials in Canberra said they had been in touch with the Saudi authorities to request leniency. Now it is time to watch and see the outcome of the request.

However, the purpose of my writing this letter is to draw the attention of the readers and the authorities in Bangladesh regarding the fate of six Bangladeshi workers who were beheaded in public in Riyadh in October this year (on a Friday) after they were found guilty of killing an Egyptian in 2007.

The total number of executions in the country this year is 58 so far and they are mostly migrant workers from developing countries. Most importantly, many of the foreign workers don't understand Saudi court proceedings in Arabic and they rarely get lawyers to represent their cases.

Mansor is an Australian citizen and by his name I presume that he is not a white person who gets high respect in Arab countries. Workers from the third world countries are often called 'Miskin' there and treated very inhumanly and their salaries are very low and not regularly paid.

Now, I would tell my country people to follow Mansor's fate and see how the Saudi authorities deal with this case.

Kakali Adhikary

Nara, Japan

Lack of commitment of our political parties

The major political parties of Bangladesh have failed to hold any significant political programme that could influence the participants in the UN climate conference in Durban. Perhaps the leaders of both the parties were busy preparing notes to blame each other on this issue.

The Kyoto protocol signed in 1997 was the first legally binding emission control agreement which is set to expire in 2012.

We hope our political parties would be united to express their concern over the non-committal approach and the inactions of the developed countries because we are the innocent victims of climate change.

Mobarak Ali

RK Mission Road

Intolerance is not democracy

I am an NRB and have come to my country after eight long years. I am happy to see a democratically elected government in power. One of the poorest countries in the world, Bangladesh faces a lot of serious challenges. One of them is how to handle the democratic process after years of military rule and some civilian misrule. The other day I was shocked to see a picture on the front page of The Daily Star. A person was striking a motorcyclist on his chest with a brick. The main thing in a democracy is the right of an individual to say or do what he wants to say or do without causing harm to others. And others have to tolerate that behaviour however wrong they might think it is. That means the motorcyclist had the right not to observe the hartal. What I saw in the picture was barbaric, undemocratic and criminal. It should be the number one priority of the responsible authorities to find out that individual with the brick and prosecute him. And please do not tell me this is how things are done in Bangladesh - that will be an insult to all the peace-loving Bangalees.

Samuel Mondle

Carnarvon Road

Nottingham, UK



PHOTO: STAR

UK's position on the proposed EU Treaty

I am writing about last week's European Council meeting which has been widely reported in The Daily Star and other news media to clarify the United Kingdom's position.

David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, attended the European Council on 8/9 December, which covered economic policy, energy and enlargement. But all interest is focused on the UK's rejection of an agreement on how to address the debt crisis. The proposed agreement sought to change the European Union's treaty to enshrine stricter budget discipline and penalties for countries that failed to adhere to them. The thinking behind it is that only by reforming economies would be indebted members of the euro zone and the single currency emerge from the turmoil.

The UK's position is to leave the EU Treaty intact, maintaining rules on keeping markets open and free trade for the whole of Europe. Instead of amending the EU Treaty, the Prime Minister pushed for intergovernmental arrangements, outside the EU Treaties, among the 17 States in the Eurozone that would enable them to sort their problems themselves, including through much tighter fiscal discipline and closer fiscal coordination, installing safeguards and improving competitiveness.

What does this mean? The UK's position is for the EU as a whole, including but not just for the Eurozone countries. We continue to wish the Eurozone well in its efforts to achieve the stability and growth that Europe - Britain included - and the world needs. We are not against strong regulation; in fact, we are fundamentally changing our system of regulation for financial services. At the same time, we seek a level playing field for all businesses in all EU countries while enabling every EU member state to properly manage its economy. At the EU level, it is important to have rules to keep the single market fair and open, without special treatment for some and discrimination against others.

We ensure investors that Britain's interests in the European Union are not changed. We will continue to be a key member and a key driver of further deepening of the single market, although we're not in the Euro. The UK remains fully committed to the EU, at the heart of the single market, influential over its development, and committed to work for a more flexible and dynamic Europe.

The UK remains the number one gateway to Europe, giving easy access to the 27 member states of the European Union, the world's largest single market. The UK is the easiest place to set up and run a business in Europe (World Bank: "Doing Business 2011"). The UK has one of the lowest main corporate tax rates in the EU, generous tax allowances and competitive personal rates, the most extensive network of double taxation treaties in the world and low social welfare contributions. The UK is joint first with the USA in the world for Product Market Regulation (PMR). It has the least barriers to entrepreneurship in the world and has the third fewest barriers to trade and investment in the world. The UK's labour market is one of the world's most flexible and has a strong skills base.

Nick Low

Acting High Commissioner

British High Commission

Railway ministry: A good initiative



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

The government has formed a new ministry for the railway by splitting the communications ministry followed by the appointment of two new ministers. A separate ministry for railway was being demanded by the people for years. Now we hope to have better and modern service from the railway.

People like to travel by train as it is very comfortable and safe. It is also very cost-effective, environment-friendly and free from traffic congestion.

An improved railway system can also be profitable for the government as its maintenance cost is lower compared to roads and it can carry a larger number of passengers using less fuel.

The newly formed ministry should take necessary steps like introducing high-speed trains, standardising railway tracks and signalling systems. It also needs to pay attention to the expansion of railway tracks and build an efficient railway management system.

Yeasir Arafat Nadim

4th year, Dept. of Economics

University of Dhaka

International Anti-Corruption Day

International Anti-Corruption Day is observed on 9th December every year. The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) began its journey on 31st October 2003. The convention was signed by 140 countries. UNCAC is the first legally binding international anti-corruption instrument. The UNCAC obliges its state parties to implement a wide and detailed range of anti-corruption measures.

Bangladesh also observed International Anti-Corruption Day this year. Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) arranged various programmes including debate, youth gathering, and human chain to gear up the anti-corruption campaign. This year, TIB's slogan was "40 years of glorious independence: Want good governance and prevention of corruption."

We all should raise our voice against corruption.

Seefat Kazol

University of Dhaka

We want a clean campus

It is difficult to walk in the Dhaka university campus, particularly, around the central playground, in front of the Shahidullah hall and Amar Ekushe hall, behind the central library and near the Curzon hall areas because of the stench of human wastes. Mostly rickshaw-drivers, day labourers and beggars are responsible for this situation. The reasons behind this situation are lack of awareness, inadequate number of public toilets and negligence of the authorities in taking punitive actions.

To solve this problem, some effective steps should be taken, such as: a good number of public toilets must be set up in the university area, awareness programmes should be arranged, and finally measures to penalise the wrongdoers must be taken.

We want clean environment in our campus.

Md. Ibrahim

MS in Fisheries

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's The Daily Star report head-lined "BSF kills 4"

A Bangalee

BSF kills 4. So what? India is our friend.

Anonymous

The prime minister is busy blaming the Opposition party and the foreign minister is busy with her foreign trips. The government is happy with India no matter what India is doing to us. So, killing a few people from this densely populated country doesn't worry the government at all.

Akash Sen

Such killings by BSF only widen and deepen the trust deficit between Bangladesh and India. Not keeping promises is nothing new when one is talking about India's relationship with its smaller neighbours.

Dr Islam

There is no such example in the world of regular killing of unarmed people in the border by its neighbour. It shows how shallow the promises and assurances of our neighbour is. India may be a friend of a group of people with vested interests, but whether the same is true of the general people of the country is a bug question.

An Indian

The question is why Bangladeshis need to violate Indian border as cattle traders? Why risk precious lives when they know India does not want them in its territory?

Abul, UK

After such incidents I do not understand how our government, a sizable section of our people and pro-Indian media continue to portray a rosy picture of India-Bangladesh relationship. They shamelessly praise India. Do they not love their own citizens? Our PM surprisingly remains silent. After all these killings, how can you talk of trust between these two neighbours? Such killings must be publicised with photographs through E media worldwide.

Anonymous

India will not do any harm to Bangladesh - this is the statement of Indian government and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Foreign Minister Dipu Moni believe that. So, there is nothing to worry about. This will happen and quite often.

Manzoor Ashraf

It is high time that AL did something to stop India from killing our people.

Reaz Hassan

It is a shame that the chain of command in the BSF manning the border has broken down, and even the common soldiers defy Indian central government's orders.

SNH

Cattle lives are more precious than human lives? Anyway, why has no human trafficker been ever shot dead?

Jumana Sarwar

How long will our prime minister and the foreign minister say that India will keep their words? It's time to stand together against these barbaric acts of BSF.

Md. Ismile

Let us see it in a different perspective, why do our 'cattle traders' cross the border at 4:00am under the cover of dense fog and darkness through non-designated border crossings when there are legal crossing points? And secondly, why is it that BGB has never been engaged to

Where else can we be safe?

This letter refers to a huge photograph that appeared in the back page of The Daily Star on 12 December 2011 that instantly attracted the readers' attention. If the law enforcers, who are supposed to be our rightful protectors, attack the common people on flimsy ground, then what can we do to protect ourselves from such predators?

It is a very common sight that quite a good number of vehicles of different types display labels that read 'Police', either on the dash board or on the windscreen and freely roam around the city perhaps waiting for their catches. Besides, there are also other vehicles that display some self-designated labels.

We the commoners perhaps have to be subdued with all these labels and accept whatever may befall us without getting any help. May Allah protect us from these evils.

Mashudul Haque