

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 200 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Stand up to your tormentors



The protests concerning rape - all rape - that demand action by 'the authorities' are surely avoiding a key aspect of the issue. Why should any girl who has been raped, not commit suicide or want to live when they have been indoctrinated to believe that their future life is doomed - they will be unmarried, a liability to their family, an object of shame in their community - in other words, they might as well be dead? But who told them this - WHO? If that is all the 'sex education' some communities give their children, the argument for a correct and compassionate version to be part of a compulsory syllabus, in schools, mobile classrooms and street theater, is overwhelming. Let me invite some of your readers, sir, to ask their friends, family and employees the following questions:

Would you yourself, or your son, marry a woman who had been raped? If you heard people speaking badly of a local girl who had been sexually abused, would you remain silent or openly rebuke them and actively help her to play a full part in public life?

Do you allow boys and men to boast of their

sexual conquests, especially of maidservants, street-girls, handicapped women and other vulnerable females?

If rape has been committed, what are the chances of you forming a group to press for justice?

Are you prepared to help women to get out of abusive sexual relationships, inside or outside marriage, and pay, maybe via taxation, for 'safe houses' for such women and their rehabilitation to normal society?

Would you press your religious leaders to take a clear stand on this issue and preach against it?

The African expression - 'It takes a whole village to raise a child' illustrates this issue also. If rape is no longer to be tolerated, a huge social commitment is necessary with, I hope, religious leaders in the forefront, to overturn entrenched cultural prejudices that are the main factor in producing the present misery and injustice. Some 'developed' countries are not perfect but we are a long way down the road from this dear country.

Angela Robinson
Baridhara DOHS, Dhaka

India's New Year gift to Bangladesh

Four dead bodies on the border in two days - this is how our big neighbour greeted us in the early hours of New Year 2013. Home minister of Bangladesh has already said that the Border Security Force (BSF) of India has the right to shoot in self-defence. What boggles our mind is how on earth two alleged petty criminals (illegal cow traders BSF version) could pose such serious threat to disciplined, trained and firearm carrying soldiers. This is not the first time that BSF showed total disrespect to Bangladeshi lives. The killing of Felani, an innocent girl, comes to mind. Even her dead body was left to hang on the barbed fence of the border for days. Her family suffered as they could not arrange a proper burial ritual for days as BSF declined even to handover the dead body. The brutal beating of a cow trader by BSF (as was shown on YouTube) is another example. The list will go on and on.

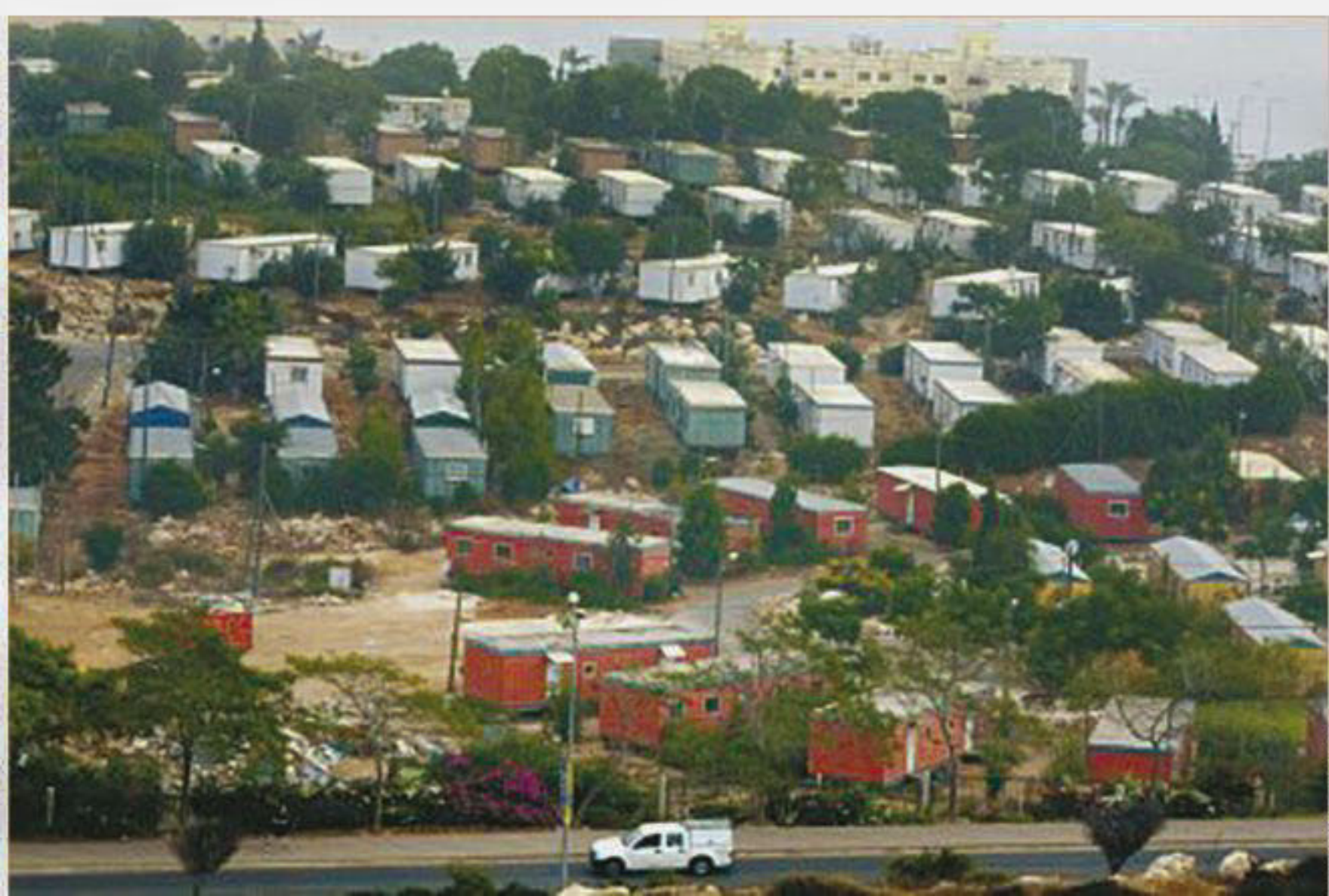
The major two political parties never cared for national interest or dignity. The sheer brutality of BSF meted out on Bangladeshi citizens always surprised me. It seems BSF treats Bangladeshi citizens as less than humans and consider that they (Bangladeshi citizens) can be killed for pleasure.

Israel's audacity and defiance

Only a day after the UNGA overwhelmingly passed a resolution on November 29, recognising Palestine within the 1967 borders as a non-member observer state, Israeli government showed the audacity to announce a new settlement plan of constructing 3000 residential units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. On December 19, 14 out of 15 member countries of the UN security council condemned Israel for its intention to build the new settler homes on occupied land and on December 21, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a televised interview reacted by saying, "I don't care what the UN says about".

The Israeli government's audacious behaviour and defiant attitude are the outcome of continuous "indulgence" given to this 'illegal' state by its 'patrons' in the west, especially the United States. 'Two-State' solution has been thrust on the Palestinian Arabs, but Israel has been continuously grabbing Palestinian land by constructing settler homes for the Jews. If land-grabbing by Israel continues unhindered, will there be any land left for the establishment of a sovereign Palestine? Only the US, Israel's chief mentor and protector, can give the answer!

Md. Mohsin Ali
Nutan Courtpara
Kushtia



Bangladeshis expendable?

In the early morning of January 1, 2013, Border Security Force of India (BSF) killed two Bangladeshi cattle traders on Bujruk border in Thakurgaon. Nur Islam, 28, and Moktar Dai, 27, died instantly. Then again on January 2, BSF shot dead two more Bangladeshi cattle traders near a border area in Chapainawabganj and held two others in Joypurhat.

May be these are New Year's gifts from a friendly nation! It seems that the BSF is on a shooting spree and practicing their targeting skills. We are shocked at the response of Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir. We saw no expression of outrage, protest or demand for explanation! The home minister simply said that the government would investigate whether the BSF has broken its agreement with BGB that the two forces would not open fire unless it was for self-defence. How absurd, self-defence from unarmed cattle traders!

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Why blame a local newspaper only?

It's amazing that the IWCT and the parties are all focused on Skype conversation and on poor 'Amar Desh'. This little newspaper has outreached the boundaries of Bangladesh. But they are not looking at the Economist, a respected journal with international readership. That weekly has published far more damaging revelations, such as Ahmad Ziauddin drafting the charge sheet against Ghulam Azam; a government minister approaching Justice Nizamul Huq to expedite the verdict; and the government being mad for judgment in Sayedee's case before 16 December.

Syed Golam Jilani
Staten Island
New York, USA

Brand product without label!

The other day I bought wet wipes for my newborn baby from a renowned pharmacy at Banani. It was "Chu Chu Wet Wipes". I have seen some TV commercials of this brand. I was surprised that there was no company name, no manufacturer's name, or no importer's name on the packet although "Chu Chu" is a registered trademark.

I believe, in our country there are minimum rules to market a product. This product is for the infants. If this is the case of such a brand, where shall we go?

Md. Saiful Islam Shajib

Why are vegetables so dear?



In Bangladesh, winter is the season of vegetables. Huge quantities of different varieties of vegetables are cultivated throughout the country. The prices of vegetables usually decrease in this season. But this year the consumers are confronting a different situation. The price of every vegetable in Dhaka is abnormally high.

A Bangla national daily reported that a few groups of people forcibly purchase vegetables from the wholesalers at the entry points of Dhaka city. The wholesalers can not enter the wholesale kitchen markets in the city because of them. The law enforcing agencies overlook this for what reasons they know better.

The government has the responsibility to protect the interest of the consumers. I would like to urge the agriculture minister, commerce minister and home minister to take pragmatic measures to protect the interest of the consumers.

Mohd. Ashraf Hossain
Ramna
Dhaka

No mercy to Tangail rapists

The gang-rape of a schoolgirl in Tangail has shocked the whole country. The rights activists have voiced concern and made demand for ensuring security of women. They brought out processions and formed human chains to press home their demand for capital punishment to the criminals who confined and raped the 15-year-old schoolgirl for four days and videoed the morbid scenes.

Rights activists have expressed their deep concern over the loopholes in law through which rapists often get either bail or are set free unconditionally. This is because proving a rape case is very tough in Bangladesh. But things have taken a new turn here in Tangail. The rapists themselves confessed to having committed the crime.

Now people want speedy trial of the perpetrators who are worse than beasts. Ironically, such outrages are being committed in the country when the prime minister and the main opposition leader are women. We hope exemplary punishment will be meted out to the Tangail rapists. It is high time we all stood against violence against women.

Md. Sairul Islam
Lecturer in English
Jahangirpur Girls' School and college
Mohadevpur
Naogaon

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's *The Daily Star* news report headlined "Mega projects, mega failures"

Habibur Rahman

Though the government has failed in the mega projects, they have shown outstanding success in mega grafts! Bravo AL! Carry on; after all, you are still ahead of your arch rival BNP!

Citizen

If the government has the right intention, we should appreciate it. It is not easy to implement these projects. But special measures are needed to execute these projects irrespective of which party is in the government. National interest should come first and BNP should join parliament for discussion.

Mufassil Islam

It is nice to see that *The Daily Star* has started being more critical about the present government. But it would have been better if the criticisms had started long ago. *The Daily Star* is a brave newspaper but it needs to be braver.

Rch

Corruption and people with zero project experiences ruined it.

Zaman Rahman

By the way, what happened to the Mongla port upgrade project for transit purposes? As far as I recall, a MoU was signed 4 years ago but after that there is no news about the project. Will we consider this a mega failure too?

Dr. Karim

Dear AL, cancel all holidays, work 7 days a week, implement your election manifesto within 350 days, remove financial loopholes, invest the remittance money which is sitting idle, listen to what TIB says, and be careful about human rights.

Harun Rashid

I am not surprised at all. We can not expect apple from a mango tree. We elected the people most of whom are corrupt and the few people who are honest can do little against the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. We would see the same picture or worse if BNP runs the country because all are same. Indeed, we need to prepare for a change.

Nasim Hasan

AL government is the strongest, dynamic and versatile government in the history of independent Bangladesh! They have showed their strength by killing innocent people like Bishwajit. Their dynamic diplomacy has put the long expected Padma bridge project in jeopardy. The versatile secretaries of AL government have proved their eligibility by making untold amount of fortune during their 4-year tenure.

Hafeejul Alam

Thanks a lot to M Abul Kalam Azad and Sharier Khan for pinpointing the lapses of the present government. However, we must remember that despite many shortcomings the present government at least tried to go ahead with many mega and non-mega projects, some with success and some with partial or no success at all. If we compare the achievements of the present regime with those of any one of the past, things will look not so discouraging. The balance-sheet may still encourage people to be opti-

Goodbye, Tony

Former England cricket captain and famous commentator Tony Greig has died on December 29, 2012. He played 58 Test matches for England, scored 3599 runs and took 141 wickets during his career and was named one of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack's players of the year in 1975. He captained 14 Test matches. He became a popular commentator with his extraordinary interpretation. The entire cricket world will miss him.

S. M. Imranul Islam Rajon
Mohammadpur