

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 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

**Autorickshaw off the road**

This letter is in response to Atahar Chowdhury, Lalmatia, Dhaka on 'Autorickshaw off the road' (January 2). The letter writer has emphasised that, 'people should matter most to the Government than pollution'. True, but without proper pollution control, there will not be any people left to matter.

I endorse the Government's ban on two stroke auto-rickshaw engines. The answer to the commuter's problem is not allowance of the smoke spewing three wheelers, but improvement of the overall Dhaka mass transit system. Let's have the foresight to tough it out for some time. All for a good cause - a more habitable Dhaka.

On hindsight, the Communications Ministry should consider setting up a foreign joint-venture bus manufacturing plant in Bangladesh. Focus is now on Dhaka city and we may do away by importing few hundred buses, but wait till we start to address mass transit issues in other cities and towns all across the country.

**BL**  
On e-mail

This is in reference to the letter by Aran Khan Anjan (January 2). What does the writer mean by that the Government should be more cautious about looking after the interest of those who have private cars? Only because they pay more tax? Is the writer trying

to say that the middle-class and the lower income people don't mean anything? Is he trying to say that it doesn't matter whether these people wait in the sun and soak in the rain for a transport to avail? They don't have a private car, therefore, they are not human beings!

The roads are not for only people like Mr Anjan to have a smooth drive it is everyone-- a pajero owner and also a rickshawpuller.

**Hashim Khan**  
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Now that the polluting automobiles are off the road, I wish the people in power only for one day had to wait in the long line to get an auto-rickshaw or to board a jam-packed bus during busy hour.

We are glad that the pollution problem is under control. But the general people are suffering immensely because of lack sufficient automobiles on the road and there seems to be no one to ease their misery.

**Saima Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

I have had the most miserable day on the first day of the new year. There were no auto-rickshaw available, most of the roads were off the rickshaw as well and I was two hours late in the office. This



People or pollution: The tricky question

cannot go on. Please provide us enough transport and install meters in the remaining ones to save our time and also our pocket.

**Habibullah**  
Dhaka

**Bangladesh's priorities**

As Chairman of the Anti-Communist International I would like to express my agreement with the remarks of "Riki," ("Road links with Burma", December 31, 2002)

I am not opposed to the road links per se, but to the potential of misuse of that project by the Chinese Communists. They have never shrunk from utilising Chinese imperialist tendencies to preserve their political power, which is inevitably ultimately foredoomed as free market economic factors continue evolving internal pressures for China to discard the inherently un-Chinese Communist ideology.

It would be even more fruitful for Bangladesh to draw more attention to the cynical manipulation of water sources for Bangladesh, quite easily facilitated by the mundane Indian State bureaucracy. My private sector infrastructure barometers show that within ten years of the ending of the water supply shortages and flooding in Bangladesh, alternately caused by India, Bangladesh would become a truly prosperous and stable democratic nation due to the long proven creative capability of Bengalis, shown not least of all by the hi-tech skills of your newspaper's parent company.

The deplorable destruction of the World Trade Center Twin Towers here in New York City drew attention to the basically un-Islamic religious fanatics of al-Qaeda. Unfortunately, these vile acts of these deviants have served to somewhat eclipse the fact that there are not only Muslim religious fanatics and extremists in this world, but also Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Shintoist and even Buddhist, religious extremists and fanatics. Fortunately, religious bigotry and bias are not in any way an inherent characteristic of the Bangladeshi national psyche.

If Bangladesh is to blossom as a

centre of civility befitting its vast cultural and other achievements that are a part of its national continuity, it is important that the aforementioned water problem be addressed as a paramount priority by the Bangladesh Government with the help of the United States and the International Community.

**Dr. Jon Speller, Chairman**  
Anti-Communist International  
New York, USA

**Bring in Jamaat-e-Islami!**

I am stunned to read the letter of Anjumman Akhtar (Sheikh Hasina and our image abroad, January 2, 2003)! How could he propose to give an opportunity to Jamaat Mr Akhtar might be a staunch supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami. But the general people aren't and they will never be.

Keeping aside Jamaat's questionable background, they are a party which has extreme religious view. And I'm sure majority of our people against it and believe in communal harmony, unlike Anjumman Akhtar.

It's true that we are sick and tired of AL and BNP but that doesn't mean that we have to bring in another Frankenstein.

**Anilla Khan**  
New Eskaton Rd, Dhaka

I am responding to the letter of Anjumman Akhtar regarding the right party to rule our country. I agree with her on the point that both Awami League and BNP have failed to keep the image of our country, but at the point you say that Jamaat Islam should lead, like BJP in India, I have to object.

Firstly BJP is a fascist hardcore Hindu Party, and in their rule there has been literally a massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, lately, killing hundreds of innocent Muslims. This clearly proves India to be not a safe place for people of religion other

than Hinduism. I think if Jamaat Islami came into power the same would be the result. At the same time womenfolk would be deprived of their human and Islamic rights.

As a responsible Muslim, I am aware that every human being has a right to live in peace no matter what religion he/she follows, and we as Muslims must learn to live with people of other religions.

At the same time every womenfolk has the Quranic right to work. And I'm pretty sure these won't exist when Jamaat-e-Islami comes to power.

**Shaddy Islam**  
Toronto, Canada

Bring in Jamaat-e-Islami to rule Bangladesh! Are we out of our mind? Have we already forgotten their role in 1971? Aren't we aware of their extreme religious views?

I know how frustrated we have become with Awami League and BNP but that doesn't mean that we have to take suicidal steps to relieve our misery. And after the Twin Tower tragedy, where the Muslim communities through out the world have been almost blacklisted the idea of voting a party with extreme religious views can in no way accepted.

Let's not forget that we do live on foreign donation and the donor country's liking and disliking matter a lot.

**Abu Hena**  
New York, USA

**AL-BNP relationship**

I also support Mansoor Khan's (January 2, 2003) view that the bitter relation between AL and BNP is our main problem. And if things would have been a bit different we wouldn't probably been considered as the most corrupt country in the world.

Isn't there any way to improve their relation? If there is anything that we can do then I am sure the majority of people would come forward. In the mean time we should

try ourselves to come up with ideas to how to improve the relation between Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. I am sure if we all think hard, we will come up with ideas that will help improve their relation and thus help in ending our misery.

I urge all the readers to come up with ideas and submit those in the Letters Page. I am sure the leaders would notice it and realise how desperate we are and then consider patching up with each other.

**Naila Rahman**  
Chittagong

This is in reference to Mansoor Khan's letter. He pointed out that if there prevailed an amicable relationship between the PM and Opposition Leader our life wouldn't have been so miserable. And he is absolutely right.

I am not saying that in other countries the political leaders are the best of friends. They all have different opinions, might even disagree on each and every issue. But they do have mutual respect for each other. They don't abuse each other in vulgar language and don't get involved in mudslinging. And most importantly, to them national interest matters the most. At the moment of crisis they become united.

But can we expect the same from our politicians? The answer is a big 'NO'. They are always at daggers drawn with each other, don't hesitate to complain to the foreigners regarding internal issues, arrest the opposition politicians at the first opportunity and regard each other as one's biggest enemy.

So I am afraid Mansoor Khan's wish would remain unfulfilled forever.

**Alam Chowdhury**  
California, USA

**Contemporary American foreign policy**

Apart from what Al-Qaeda made America see through the rubbles of September 11, its foreign policy in the contemporary world remains indifferent in most instances. This claim will prove righteous if we look into what's making America go for a showdown with Iraq, and not with North Korea.

If we deeply analyse the difference between these two countries defiant with American policy, we will see that due to North Korea possessing nukes, it's more to endanger regional peace in Asia than what Saddam's Iraq could possibly do, although Iraq does not possibly have such intentions. Secondly, North Korea being a hardcore communist country in the world accumulates more clearly a philosophical difference than what America and rest of the democratic free world perceive as viable for peaceful tomorrow. Iraq in this case could be considered as one of the many Arabian regimes where America remains silent on the issues of democratic governance. Thirdly, America, following the North Koreans refusal to discontinue nuclear programs, has chosen to follow the diplomatic efforts to defuse the rivalry and tensions perceiving that a war with North Korea could bring more harms than goods in the end. The scenario regarding Iraq stands exactly the opposite since Iraq has still shown no hindrance in complying with United Nations resolutions backed by the United States. Nor it has expressed any direct or indirect threats to the United States or any of its neighbours in the recent past.

Facing a survival concern due to economic collapse, North Korea may have nukes not necessarily meant to attack United States. Rather its deviance happens to be a gimmick since Washington's imposed embargoes are being in disregard to its fallen economy. Therefore, North Korean issues are more accessible to diplomatic solutions for Americans and a peaceful solution with North Korea will serve most to the American interest.

Since America remains the only lone superpower both economically and militarily, American engagement into the world affair matters. In defiance, a country in the contemporary world may isolate from military actions of the United States, but could hardly escape its economically draining sanctions able to ruin

**consensus and bury the differences**

I believe most of us would agree with me that Bangladesh is passing through one of its most difficult periods. Over the years among others we have continually thrived on rifts and even nurtured discord and differences of opinion. Things have now come to such a pass that no one knows as to who is doing what to whom. However one thing for sure, that in the process the majority of the population, who live in near endemic state of poverty, has been the worst sufferer.

The gap between the rich and the poor has widened to an astronomical level. The much talked about age-old value system of Bengalis, which in more ways than one advocated "plain living and high thinking" has been replaced by sheer materialism and greed for money.

The land encroachment on innumerable city water-bodies and on the banks of rivers have narrowed down the riverine routes to a dangerous level and are slowly and surely creating acute ecological imbalance and environmental pollution. The so-called construction boom with its skyscrapers of shopping malls and housing complexes of urbanisation and building mega-cities, is bound to lead to disastrous consequences since we are in the midst of a vulnerable "earth-quake" zone in the region.

At the backdrop of this critical state of affairs the ruling party and the opposition are at logger-heads with each other. Things which rate high on their agenda is continuous bickering and finding ways and means in maligning and defaming each other be it at the cost of the people and the nation at large.

Very recently the Director of Amnesty International voiced her concern over the deteriorating state of Human Rights in Bangladesh. While the ruling party is engaged in

other hand, does not develop in a day. In some culture, the people tend to believe others easily. This happens when some one has sufficient reason to believe that the other would not lie or mislead him or her. Thus the whole issue seems to hinge on mutual understanding. In Bangladesh, such mutual understanding, if there was any in the past, has been disappearing fast.

One of the major causes of this our habit of taking things lightly. We are not careful about our behavioural pattern. We do not try to realise what may be the effect of our uncalculated utterances and indecent behavioural pattern. We do not try to verify if there is truth in what we have said or what we are saying. We do not consider if our behaviour affects others adversely. We very often believe in heresy and do not hesitate to relay the same to others. This has become a social disease in our country.

The common people find it difficult to trust the leaders anymore. They are left in wilderness and are found to become easy prey of negative thinking. They forget to think positively. This seems to be true for almost all sections of our people. If we compare newspaper reports of Bangladesh with those of other countries, we would immediately discover the differences. All the negative issues get headlines here. Continuous reading of such reports is bound to make people lose their positive feelings.

In developed worlds, the leaders are always the source of hopes and inspiration for the commoners. Unfortunately, our leaders have failed to be the source of hopes and inspiration for others. The situation is worsening day by day.

However, we do have many good things in our society. All of us are not bad people. Despite all odds, we have developed in many areas. We have proved our talents in various fields. But we have to go a long way. And for this we are to change our-

**North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship will backfire**



North Korea's decision to reactivate its nuclear program is basically aimed at attracting international attention and make other nations, especially the United States, to save its economy from collapsing. North Korea is a Third World country with a massive military machine it cannot afford. It has virtually no industry and its agriculture has been neglected to the extent that it cannot provide a fraction of its food requirements.

As long as the Cold War was on, North Korea could depend on other communist countries like China and the Soviet Union to provide economic assistance. Now it is virtually friendless. China, its greatest benefactor, has abandoned communism in favour of the market economy. China is now integrated with the world economy and its relations with the capitalist countries have been growing by leaps and bounds. North Korea's rival South Korea is among China's most important business partners. For an isolated and a paranoid nation like North Korea, this is a nightmare of the worst kind. It has nowhere to go and with starvation and famine knocking at the door, the North Korean regime must be terribly concerned about a popular backlash from its long-suppressed people. Even a revolt of the armed forces cannot be ruled out.

Given such a pathetic situation, the North Korean regime is left with no choice but to indulge in the old game of brinkmanship pre-

ferred by most autocratic regimes in trouble. Nuclear weapons and missiles remain the only instruments left to draw the attention of other countries, especially the United States which underwrites the security of South Korea. North Korea's decision to revive its nuclear program has raised the fears of Japan, South Korea and the United States. Though much smaller and poorer and less strategically important than Iraq, a nuclear-armed North Korea would still be a threat to its neighbours. And North Korea has also capability to deliver these weapons with its relatively long-range Tapedong missiles.

Yet, North Korea may not be that big a threat it seems to be. Firstly, it is an absolutely poor nation entirely dependent on external assistance for its survival. Secondly, going to war to save its skin will only lead to its total destruction. North Korea can cause serious damage to South Korea, but it will not be able to sustain any retaliatory strike by the United States. It can no longer look toward China to guarantee its survival. This is why North Korea's nuclear blackmail is likely to backfire provided the United States and other nations do not cave in.

North Korea's nuclear program has also a lesson for Iraq. Iraq must be stopped before it can develop its own nuclear weapons and blackmail its neighbours and the world.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Canada

**Human cloning**

Finally, after a lot of conjecture about whether human cloning should be proscribed or cherished, the first human clone is now on this earth asserting its presence.

Being a science enthusiast I am delighted to see the successful result, the triumphant accomplishment of yet another humongous scientific endeavour in the field of Genetic Engineering. I can see the possibilities of cloning human, especially if we are able to reproduce Einstein, Mozart and Rabinadrath so that they can take this world to a bit further for the betterment of human race. But at the same time a dark thought overshadows my perception of the good intention of the scientists behind human cloning.

What if the know-how falls in the wrong hand? What if dictators and the military use it for the fulfilment of their evil scheme? I don't know what they will do with this knowledge but they will obviously come up with something destructive. Just think of dynamite and one can get the picture.

One other thing is cloning is only capable of reproducing the same living thing imbued with same characteristics. So, even we will be able to have another noble man who is on the verge of leaving this world for good we still need to rely on natural process to get a man who will be better than Einstein or Newton or Addison. The process of nature is slow but it is the proven path.

Being an ordinary human being what else we can do except for hoping that this awesome know how will help the human kind to form a far more peaceful world instead of making it a threat to the mankind.

**Ruhel Fariah Sangeeta**  
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Govt Girls High School,  
Dhaka

**Awami League's new committee**

Your valued opinion on the new Awami League committee is greatly appreciated. We are pleased that they held a conference, yet another step in maintaining the democratic principles of the party. All political parties small or large in membership must go through the democratic process of electing its leaders. The Awami League's commitment to electing a new committee at the conference is commendable. Other political parties must do the same. The Awami League is passing through a period of turmoil following the election of 2001. Their workers, leaders and sympathisers are being murdered, tortured and harassed by political opponents with impunity. Central leaders like Tofail Ahmed, Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Principal Matiur Rahman are in detention despite High Court orders to release them. Thousands and thousands of active members are in jail and many more are every day under threat of being arrested under section 54 of the Cr. P.C. Code (on suspicion, without being charged).

These leaders and workers are the heart and soul of the party. Without their physical presence the conference was seriously depleted. Nevertheless Sheikh Hasina and the members of the presidium ensured that the right people were placed in the party hierarchy. We look forward to seeing them perform their role in the party shaping the destiny of the people of Bangla-

**Sultan Mahmud Shartiff**  
London, UK

**Free Muntasir Mamoon and Shahriar Mamon**

It is high time for the Bangladeshi people to reconsider whether we are living in a civilised society or not. The way the BNP-Jamaat Government is harassing the teachers and journalists clearly indicates that they do not like any criticism which, without any doubt, is the hallmark of a dictatorial attitude.

We demand immediate release of Muntasir Mamun and Shahriar Kabir who have been kept in jail under inhuman conditions without any charges whatsoever. By taking these oppressive measures, the Government has already proved that they are bothered with what Muntasir and Shahriar were doing. The question is why someone would feel bothered about others who are saying the truths! We hope the BNP-Jamaat Government will start thinking more wisely.

**Muktadir Shahid Hossain**  
Tokyo, Japan

**Time to build**

And also how can we be sure that the cloned babies will not be affected with some incurable diseases in future. They might become disabled, might even die a premature death! What will happen to the parents then?

Once again I would like to remind all that we are human beings and we must know our limit.

**Kajali Khan Komol**  
Baily Road, Dhaka

**The clone conundrum**

I am indeed astonished by the accomplishment of our scientists that they have been successful in cloning human beings. It is indeed an overwhelming and unique news.

However, I am not very clear how the process works. Say, if I have a clone of my own would he grow up to be absolutely me? Would he look like my identical twin? Would he flunk in mathematics, the way I flunked in my school days? Would we have the same taste, same hobby, same ideology? If that is the case then this is absolutely unbelievable! In other words, we can say that human being has become immortal!

Another thing, if there is a clone of say Rabinadrath would he produce the same old write-ups or new ones? If new ones then it is incredible! We could clone the genius and become immensely enriched in every sector.

Would any one please enlighten me regarding these issues?  
**Rahul Khan**  
Gulshan, Dhaka



The clone conundrum

Operation Clean Heart

People in our country have in general welcomed Operation Clean Heart. They heaved a sigh of relief at the significantly improved law and order situation. They don't have to live in constant fear of whether all the family members will be able to come home safely after the days work.

Those who are screaming their lungs out at the so-called death in custody probably don't have any idea how does it feel to live with such terrifying uncertainty. We are law abiding general people trying hard to lead a decent life. We have no sympathy for those criminals who made our life a living hell.

We welcome and support the army wholeheartedly who have brought the law and order under control and also where there is a will there is a way.

**S. Zunair**  
Dhaka

"vehement denials", the Opposition is engaged turning the matter into an international issue through castigating the ruling party and vandalising our national image.

Now is the time we should bury our differences and work together in order to uphold the ever-sinking image of our country even if it means swallowing of individual and or collective "ego and pride".

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

**Anation with faith lost**

Faith on others is, perhaps, a prerequisite for peaceful living in a society. When it is lost, everything gets unbalanced. Bangladesh is a country where people seem to have least faith on others. The common people do not trust the leaders, the leaders the commoners. A student does not have faith on his teacher and the teacher his student. The same situation prevails in the business world. Here the newspaper reports are taken as biased and highly motivated. Most of the readers tend to question them. This state of affairs is neither acceptable nor desirable.

The issue of believing others has direct link with the culture of that particular society. A culture, on the