

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 and the affluent"**

The letters by Mr. Aran Khan Anjan (January 02 and 08) have created an interesting debate these days. Let me state an incident that happened to me one day before the Government banned rickshaws on the Mirpur Road. While I was on my way to Mohammadpur by a rickshaw, suddenly the rickshawpuller asked my permission to stop at a nearby footpath seller and bought a mirror for 60 taka. He was telling me that his average daily income is about 120 taka and his daughter insisted him to buy it for her. I was really surprised that a man whose family depends on his poor income can buy a gift that costs him half of it.

car but the majority of citizens don't. The person who used to pay 10-taka rickshaw fare to go to office or school is now forced to pay 40 taka for an autorickshaw. And the Government has kindly increased the fuel price during this critical situation! Aran, does your car mean to you so much more than these citizens do? **MA Siddique, IUT, Dhaka**

How much tax Aran pays is irrelevant with the service he gets from the government, meaning that if he pays more he cannot assume a right of getting better service. Agreeing with Nobina (January 8), his tone for the poor is really arrogant. And yes saying the truth can make a person arrogant, if

think that is more important to them, than Aran going for a drive or relaxing at his friend's house from any perspective. I am not criticising Aran, I am just disgusted at the fact that people brought up in our country, earning money in our country, exploiting people of our country, find our country's vehicle "pesky", "peculiar". Mr. Anjan, not beating up the rickshawpuller does not make him a noble person, rather it is those people who beat up others are the ones who are beasts in nature. And just like Ashim Saha said, "All the rich people are worried about his personal welfare. Given the slightest chance they blame the poor but cannot live one day without

walk or ride a public bus to the congested city centre. Are we ready to do that? If not we should be blaming the 3-wheelers for the traffic jams and resulting pollution. The 4-wheeled public and private vehicles with worn-out engines, faulty tuning, misfiring spark plugs and such other malaise are equally to be blamed for the pollution. The other evening, I had to suffer one and a half-hours of immobility sitting in a 'air conditioned' taxicab that was profusely smelling of unburned petrol in the Banani-Mohakhali stretch of the Airport Road. The jam could not be blamed on the three-wheelers as none (even the CNG four-stroke variety) were in sight. It is obvious, the problem is more deep-rooted than

the BNP Govt came to power, but fuel price have jumped by 10 taka. Raising the price of fuel about 35% in about a year's time is a great oppression upon the people. This oppression must stop. Prices of basic commodities are also going to rise accordingly. All I see is dark gloomy days ahead of us! **Qazi Rubayet Ahmed, Dhaka**

**Dhanmondi: Semi-commercial to commercial!**

As a resident of Dhanmondi Residential Area, I was extremely disheartened by the recent comments made by the Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas in regards to allowing commercialisation of Dhanmondi as well as those of Gulshan and Banani. The Minister is probably in the dark as what kind of environmental harassment we residents have already gone through.

Mushrooming of private schools, colleges, universities, along with countless offices of NGOs, training centres, clinics and hospitals, have already diluted the residential character of the these areas and these activities are illegal. Undeclared commercialisation of this residential area has resulted in unusually large volumes of traffic jams, noise and air pollution, the residents' inability to access and leave their homes at certain times and innumerable street vendors catering to these businesses. Legalising and allowing more such developments will act as the final nails to the coffin of destroying these residential areas. Such total disregard and such *laissez faire* approach to urban planning is not only tragic, but unless reversed, will eventually turn Dhaka into one of those sprawling third world megalopolises synonymous to urban blight, decay, and social degradation.

The Minister has blamed the residents for the existing blight of these residential areas and the flaunting of laws in terms of usage of our homes as businesses. I don't recall even for one instance where any relevant authority has enforced any laws, and reverted any commercial use back to residential use. So, one request to the Hon' Minister is not to allow a move as such by-passing the proverbial buck of law enforcement. **M. K. Aaref, Architect Dhanmondi, Dhaka**

**"Unanswered questions"**

The "Operation Clean Heart" (OCH) has created quite a controversy in *The Daily Star* Letters Page. We have had both criticisms and support expressed in the readers' opinions.

The death toll of 40 plus not withstanding, what has the Government achieved? Have we solved the socio-economic problems that give rise to the gangster environment the country was seething under before OCH? If, a year later we have to unleash OCH II, then what? The deaths in custody, medical reasons aside, are clearly extra judicial killings. It is simply ridiculous to term the deaths as caused by heart disease.

My question is, now that the Government have punished the alleged criminals (whatever their crime is) by death, has capital punishment become the one and only penalty in the country? When the government metes out death to the people, how different is it from the gangsters?

My question to all supporters of OCH, why is it so repugnant a concept to think that people taken under custody by the law enforcement agencies have legal and constitutional rights. Many readers have expressed opinions that people in custody are criminals any way and they have less rights than the average citizen.

Why should someone in custody deserve to die? Are we not reinforcing the code of the gangsters? **Yahya, USA**

**Driving while wearing lungi**

Recently a traffic sergeant levied an official written penalty on our driver for driving the vehicle wearing LUNGI. Now, this is a "surprise news" to me and everybody else who heard about this strange incident.

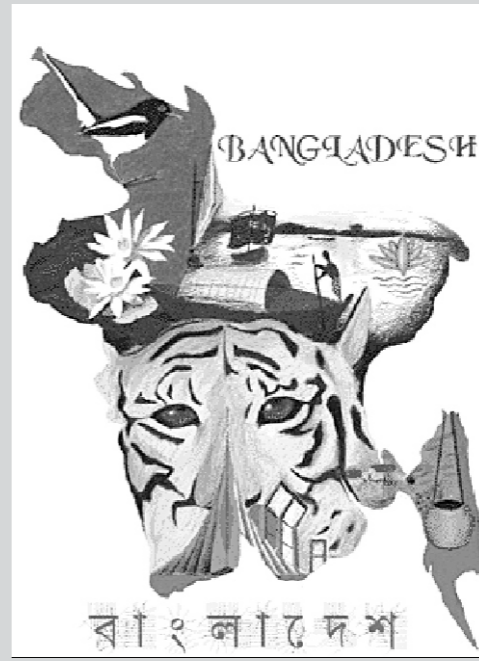
Is it really an offence to drive wearing lungi? Is a woman allowed to drive wearing Saree? If driving while wearing Saree is not an offence, then why should wearing lungi be? Lungi is our national attire. Almost all the drivers of trucks, buses, autorickshaws, rickshaws in Bangladesh drive wearing lungi. If driving while wearing lungi is an offence, then all these people are openly breaking the law. How come these people are not levied fines?

It would be appreciated if the relevant authority appraised and educated the general people about the actual status of driving while wearing lungi. Is it or is it not an offence to drive wearing lungi? **RC, Dhaka**

**Whither traffic police?**

If any one passes the intersection of five roads at Palashi Bazar, a question will certainly rise in his mind as who is to control the traffic in and around this intersection. Hardly will he find any traffic police around. If he is fortunate enough to have a sight

**"My visit to Bangladesh: An American view"**



Bangladesh. Because I have so much affection for Bangladesh, it pains me to see the problems there and I wonder if those problems are insurmountable. But I also see so many positives and I wonder why the writer did not? How would she react if a Bangladeshi visited America and went home to report only the negative sides? And we do have enough negative things here to go around. Maybe the reason East and West have such a difficult time understanding each other is that we refuse to see any positive aspects in each other's culture. Maybe we have to look hard, but we have to look if we are to ever exist together. **Amy Mohsin, San Jose, California**

This letter is addressed to the American who visited Bangladesh recently (January 8). Like you, I have travelled extensively, not just in Europe, but in the Middle East and Asia as well, but I ALSO was not prepared for America. The government workers in our country are very poorly paid, we are a developing country, and so we cannot afford to give as much money to our government workers as America gives to its workers. You say that the immigration worker was rude? Have you seen how people are treated by the American immigration service? They are beyond rude.

Yes, Bangladesh has mosquitoes, yes, our roads are bad, many things need to be improved, but you have to realise that we are a developing country or as the Western world as named us "A third world country". It is very easy to suggest ideas on how to improve things, but for us to improve things, we need natural resources, and we don't have unlimited supply of that. You say that our buses pollute, I won't argue with you on that, but to fix that problem, the bus owners has to fix their buses, and then their costs will increase, and then they will just increase the bus fares, and then can you tell me how will the poor people travel or go to their destination?

Yes, the traffic system is terrible, yes the police aren't really doing their job, but at least they are trying. For everything, we need resources and capital, and there is a limited amount of it. We cannot attack another country in the name of liberating it, and then place our own government there and get its oil.

Yes, I will agree with you on the American Embassy situation. They are very rude, a Bangladeshi might not have any right to shout at them or give them a piece of their mind, but you as an American should have done that.

All I can say is that even though our country is poor, dirty, infested with mosquitoes, and there is pollution everywhere and countless other problems... in my view you will not find a country with this much hospitality, this much pride, and this welcoming anywhere else. **K. M. Khaled Razi, Boston, Massachusetts, USA**

I am writing in response to my fellow American citizen's letter (January 8). She had just completed her first visit to Bangladesh. I too am married to a Bangladeshi and just recently completed my fourth trip to Bangladesh. I agree with the writer on many subjects. There really is no way to prepare a Westerner for what he/she will encounter in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is dirty, and it seems it gets dirtier every time we visit. No human being should have to breathe the air that the average Bangladeshi breathes. We become physically ill whenever we leave my in-law's house. There is a lot of garbage and I also agree that the Government could employ more people for regular garbage collection (there are some unemployed Bangladeshis, aren't there?).

What I found lacking in her letter was any evidence that she experienced any positive moments in Bangladesh. I always cringe when people ask "So what's it like there?" when I tell them I've been to Bangladesh. I could tell them what I see on the surface, the obvious observations. I usually do tell people about the problems. But I also tell them about the beautiful people I have encountered in Bangladesh. I was instantly accepted as a family member the first time I arrived and have come to regard the term "Bhabhi" with affection. I tell people that children are loved in Bangladesh. I have yet to see a person become very angry at a child. Bangladeshi people have infinite patience for their children. I also tell them that Bangladeshi people are very hospitable and despite my objections, insist on feeding me until I'm utterly stuffed. I have visited my mother-in-law's and father-in-law's villages and was overwhelmed with their generosity when it was apparent that most people there lived on very little. It is difficult to ignore all that is wrong with



Bangladesh: To visit or not to visit?

of that particular man, he must discover him/them gossiping, smoking or staring at something rather than carrying out his/her duty. The appointed traffic police don't, however, bother what is happening on the roads.

But the place has got extreme importance because of BUET, D.U and Eden College encompassing it. An accident may occur at any time due to the negligence of traffic police. In this connection, I would like to mention the accident that took place right at this very spot a couple of months ago leaving one female student dead. What happened after that? Obviously nothing. The authorities concerned are requested to look into this matter. **MZI, BUET**

**Ban of three wheelers**

I would like to congratulate the Government for banning those 2-stroke 3-wheelers, which is not only harmful for our health but also for our environment. The way the people have welcomed the government's decision in banning these polluting autorickshaws proves that if taken a prudent step it will always get full support of the mass.

I hope government would gradually ban all those elements like polybags, autorickshaws etc and turn our country into an environment friendly and pollution free Bangladesh. **Sohel Hara, Topkhana Road, Dhaka**

Many thanks to the Communication Minister and his team for carrying out the most difficult task of phasing

out autorickshaws. The Dhaka-dwellers would now be able to breathe fresh air and face less traffic jam. In this regard, there must be continued effort from all corners to turn Dhaka into a beautiful, pollution free city.

For faster movement throughout the city, light rail transit system, or special shuttle train could be thought about. We need fast and cheap transport keeping the environmental issues in mind.

Another crucial thing the Communication Ministry should take note of is reducing the number of road accidents in our country. Though we have had many casualties no such accidents have been properly investigated and no steps taken to reduce such accidents.

Road accident investigation and control should be an activity of BRTA, R&H and Police department. But it seems R&H is busier with construction of roads and its maintenance.

20/25-year-old vehicles should be banned. In case there is no valid paper of the vehicle and the body of the vehicle has been modified, permission could be given after joint inspection by BRTA and Engineering University experts. Fitness of commercial vehicles such as bus, minibus and luxury coach could be done in different motor companies. These companies must provide sufficient evidence to prove their competency in this regard and deposit enough security money to penalise in case they make false certificates. We have many things to do in order to improve our transport and communication sector.

**MM Haque, On e-mail**

**What image!**

I read scores of letters regarding the IMAGE of Bangladesh and the role of Sheikh Hasina and our PM. But do you people really think that people in the rest of the world still believe in the words of some politician or PM without verifying the facts?

Recently, I have come across some facts about a country. I am just presenting some of it below:

1. The ruling party can send people to prison without showing any reason.
2. The ruling party can make a list of criminals without showing the procedure to anyone.
3. The ruling party can use the army to march into civilians' houses and arrest people.
4. More than 40 people have died in custody without any trial whatsoever.
5. The reason behind these deaths in custody is 'heart failure'!
6. The ruling party can send all the people who talk against 'their governance' to prison.
7. And some people of the country are ready to accept all these as long as they can live safely!

Can you tell me what country we are talking about? **Talat Islam, On e-mail**

**What is India heading towards?**



Unfriendly India?

Recently, the Indian Government declared it would deport about 20 million 'illegal' Bangladeshi immigrants. All of a sudden the Indian Government has realized that these 20 million Bangladeshis (most of whom are Muslims) pose a serious threat to the internal security of India since they might be working for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Spy Agency. As far as my knowledge goes, most of the Bangladeshis who settled in India during 1970-1971 crossed the border in fear of war and have been living there as normal citizens ever since. They have settled there and have been living like Indians for 31 years. Very few of them should have any motive of working as spies or so because I know Indians are great Nationalists and patriots. But of course, if this drive is aimed at driving out Muslims from India, it is another issue then. I cannot help referring to India as a country where strong ethnic and racial discrimination exists after the ruthless killings in Gujarat, and it is quite normal for India to be displeased with Bangladesh when the present government is looking toward 'east' and not solely focusing on new bilateral agreements. Previously, the Indian government wanted to label Bangladesh as the new nest of Taliban and terrorists, and now it is heading to drive out innocent people only because they belong to one particular religion!

I feel sorry for these people who are going to be driven out unfairly. They'll be losing their homes, and probably everything else since very few of them have assets here as well. At the same time I am proud to be a Bangladeshi because there is no such racism in my country and people of other religion can live with the same respect, dignity and respect like any other Muslim. **Arani Siddiqi, IBA, DU**

I insisted him to take some more money but he refused. What will be his condition now that rickshaw plying is prohibited on many roads? Such people must mean much more to the Government than those heartless and selfish people who just think of car scratches.

The number of rickshawpullers is obviously much more than that of the needed day labourers. Now, some of those jobless people will go for robbery and hijacking since the Government has failed to provide them an alternative way of income. Paying some amount to the Government, as tax is not supposed to make people like Aran, think of himself being someone over the general people. They all pay taxes too. Maybe Aran pays a bit more but that's because he earns more.

Aran can afford a ten-lakh taka

he/she speaks in a tone of pride like you do.

Once again I fail to realise why he calls autorickshaws as peculiar, maybe you'll find them normal if you ever get to ride them, and if he is by any chance an expatriate, then I take back what I just said.

Rickshawpullers cannot be put to blame as they have very less knowledge on traffic rules, these people are illiterate, and so again by blaming them and thinking it's all their fault leads you to nothing.

Saying that "these poor people can work as day labourer" is nothing but a sign of immaturity. These poor people don't ply transport because they enjoy doing so or feel like doing it. They do it as that is their only option to earn, and that is their livelihood, and as a human being, I

depending on these 'poor people'. **Kania Mahmood, Ontario, Canada**

This has reference to the critique by Amna on Aran Khan Anjan's earlier communication.

There is certainly no room for complacency on the subject of man-made pollution causing enormous damage to our ecological system. Taking a partial or parochial view on this important issue will not help anyone, least the environment. Usually we would like to follow those norms of Europe and the North America that our whims dictate, not those that may cause some inconveniences to us.

For example, in many of those countries people are obliged to leave their private vehicles at officially approved parking areas and

that appears on the surface. A start has to be made somewhere and the Govt. should be given the credit for being courageous enough to take that first step. Some of the remedial measures now being contemplated should have been taken ages ago. We should, therefore, refrain from pointing fingers to each other and do honest soul searching. **Dr. M. B. Zaman, Uttara, Dhaka**

**Human cloning**

This is in response to the letter by Ashim Shaha (January 6). It gives me the impression that he does not have a lucid conception on the cloning methodology. Human beings have become immortal! If you are an ailing patient you will be able to cheat death by cloning yourself! Funny and Wishful thinking indeed.

Science has done a great deal of wonder, no doubt, but immortality! Well this know-how is yet to be achieved by human scholars. In this rudimentary state of development of cloning technology can only provide you with another immature copy of yourself. It would be a copy of you, but not you. Moreover the present technology can clone only human embryo which entail that when you are at the age of 50 and have cloned yourself it is obvious that you will not see a mature clone of yourself before your death assuming the fact that average life span of a Bangladeshi is below 60 years. Now, this clone will grow up in the world where everything that he knows and sees. He will have an entirely different understanding of life unless you are able to pass everything that you know to his brain. Do you think this is possible? No, not at this point of cloning evolution.

One will only be able to have an infant of his own who looks like himself, who will have the same urges and similar sort of feelings, will have the same attitude and same degree of intelligence. But what he will perceive from life have a deep impact over his personality. Besides you have to overcome the barrier of physical growth. Scientists are not able to give you an exact imitation of you who will be of your age. So, immortality through cloning is out of question. "If you tried to clone Hitler, you might instead get the personality of Thomas Jefferson" says Bonnie Stein Bock, a philosophy professor at the State University of New York.

And about replacement, I don't think a loved or dear one can be replaced. Just because someone looks and thinks in a similar way does not mean I have got back what I have lost. **Ruheeh Fariah Sangeeta, Mirpur, Dhaka**

**Fuel price hike!**

I am writing with intense frustration regarding the rise of fuel price. 35 tk per litre of octane is truly expensive enough to pop people's eyeballs.

The government has shown the people all the wrong reasons why they raised the fuel price. This rise in price will have disastrous impact on the economy. We will definitely see great inflation in the coming months, but people's salary will remain the same. It has been only one year since

**"Innocent yet tortured"**

I could not held back my tears while reading the report "Innocent yet tortured" (January 8).

The way the 16-year-old boy Mohammad Swapan was tortured is inhuman and barbaric. I have no language to express my anger and frustration. This is a serious violation of human rights, and child rights in particular. The Government must ensure that exemplary punishment is meted out to the offenders so that no similar incident takes place in future.

Thanks a lot to the police officer who paid from his own pocket to buy blood for Swapan. I must say that this is one of the rare, but positive examples of our police force.

According to *The Daily Star* report Swapan's wounds are serious and the treatment is lengthy and expensive. We urge the Government to act promptly and ensure his proper treatment. At the same time; a fair/neutral investigation must be carried out by an independent body.

This is unthinkable how the armed force of a civilised and democratic country could torture a teenage so brutally and that too when the boy is innocent. The incident that crippled Swapan for the rest of his life certainly something that undermines our image at home and abroad.

The people in uniform must remember that their resources come from the tax we pay. And the general people owe some respect from them. **Md. Sahed Ali, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada**

I have no words to condemn the barbaric act on an innocent minor Swapan. Who gave the armed force



End of innocence?

the right to beat up the boy so mercilessly? We gave mandate to the ruling party to restore law and order in the country and what have they done so far? They turned out to be an incompetent government, unable to maintain law and order. In order to hide their incompetence, they brought in the army in a democratic country. We remained silent. The army, in the name of curbing terrorism arrested innumerable number of 'criminals' and among them more than 40 people have died in custody. We still remained silent. But beating up an innocent boy! They have gone way beyond their limit!

We demand an explanation from the armed force but more importantly from the Government. The Government must bring the offenders to justice, take care of the treatment of Swapan and apologise publicly assuring us that no similar incident would ever take place. **Rajib Khan, Baridhara, Dhaka**

This letter is just an endeavour to provide a little bit of solace to my traumatised soul which is wounded

by the picture I get everyday from *The Daily Star*. I was speechless and even cried after I had perused the news "Innocent yet tortured".

I am left to ponder how come a human being with a little bit of sense could beat up an innocent minor without any kind of prior investigation. Does anybody take the trouble to think what would probably happen to that boy in future?

I used to wonder why people become crazy not to leave London, once they reach here. I have come to realise that it is not only money that makes them stay here, it is because of many other things. They know that, no matter wherever they're loved ones move they are going to be all right and secured. Well, I am not trying to eulogise this country or even compare with my homeland. Because I know we are no more worth comparing. We do not even understand that we are human beings and our lives have got some value. **Sady Mirza, On e-mail**