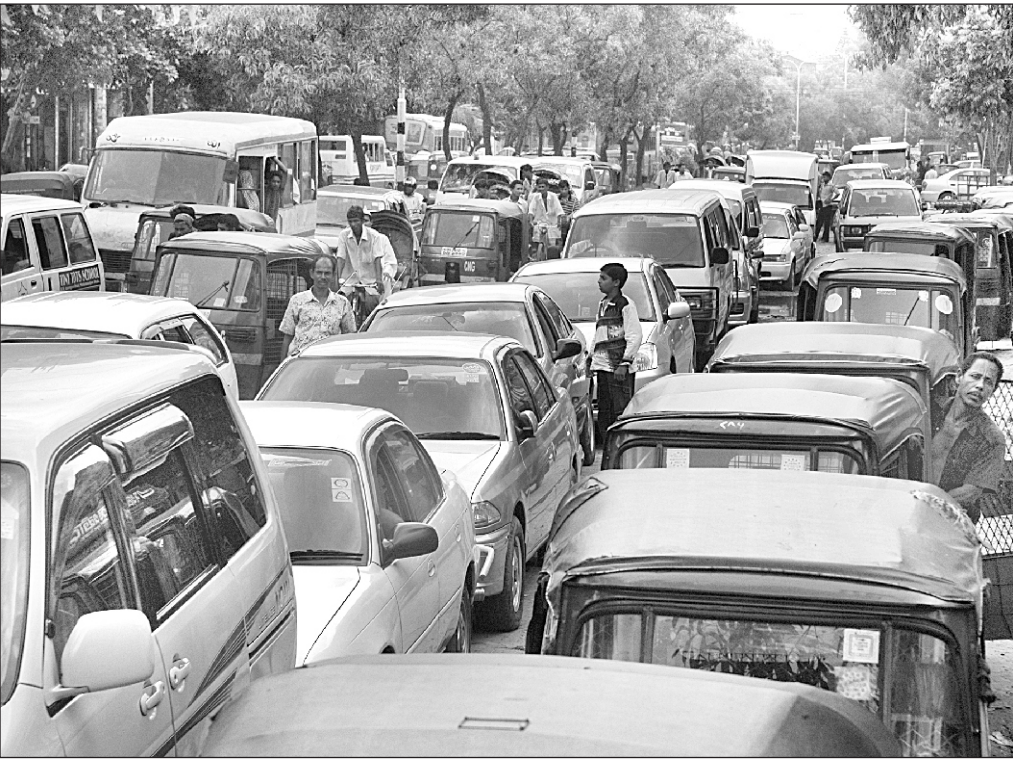


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



# Traffic congestion

Traffic congestion has become a major problem nowadays and the means to minimise it seems to be totally out of the hands of the caretaker government. It is a fact that in order to find a solution to this crucial problem the caretaker government may have overlooked that the initiative taken to ban all sorts of public transportation including rickshaws, human haulers and buses is indirectly facilitating the higher-income people, since they mostly travel by their own cars or sometimes on the CNG autorickshaws. But what about the common people, especially those who are from the middle class? Their problem has not changed a bit, but somehow has increased even more, because the local means of transportation, which has been prohibited at most of the commercial hubs of the city, was an affordable way of commutation for them. Now finding no other option they have to look for the expensive means of transportation such as the CNGs and the taxi cabs, the drivers of which, think of themselves as the kings of the roads, as they can charge whatever fare they like, being well aware of the helplessness of their passengers.

The situation is quite the same in case of the bus commuters who cannot overcome the trouble of standing in a long queue of awaiting people for their bus to come, especially with no bus stands, eventually creating traffic jams. These buses are restricted to travelling on certain routes in the city; hence they make their stops in specific locations depriving the people who reside in remote areas. As these buses are also scarce in supply, the bus owners put their passengers in the hassle of travelling all the way standing in the sweltering heat, although they too demand high prices for their tickets.

I would request the caretaker government to solve this problem by any means other than banning the small vehicles of transportation such as the rickshaws and the human haulers which were very helpful for the middle-class people. Such vehicles were also the source of livelihood to a huge number of poor people.

**Naome Syed**  
*Mohammadpur, Dhaka*

## Mugging and killing

Living in Dhaka had never been so nightmarish as it is lately, owing to mugging and killing at random. My niece Shimona, a researcher with USAID's 'Nishorgo' project escaped death by a coat of paint last week at Banani Rd. 6 when, right after her arrival from Hawaii she went to her project office and then she hired a green CNG baby-taxi in the evening to go home. The driver willfully stalled the wheel after a few yards, feigning an engine failure and within seconds as planned earlier a few muggers appeared and ruthlessly punched and kicked her all over after smearing her both eyes mercilessly with red chili powder and a sticky substance. The muggers took away a hefty sum of money from her (her salary), cell phone and other stuff. Grimacing and writhing in extreme pain she was left on the street side to be saved only by a house guard, who called us from a phone nearby. A few residents saw this beastly act happening but none came forward to her rescue - is this turning into a dog eat dog society? As I write this, my niece is still undergoing treatment at Apollo hospital, her whole face badly swollen, writhing in pain and vomiting frequently as her head was bashed as well. A host of physical check ups, nursing and a big dent in her father's wallet would probably get her back home but her dent in memory and soul shall never wither.

City dwellers, watch your steps as you venture out, for there are devils out there - on the prowl and none to help you!  
**Shah Mushtaque Ahmed**  
*On e-mail*

## Reform everywhere...

Anyone listening to the news of the private channels and going through the newspapers in recent times would have no problem in realizing the importance of the word 'reform'. Following the incidents that took place between October '06 and January '07, the reform to the political parties has become a must.

By now there are two factions in the main two political parties i.e. the Awami League and the BNP. One faction is pro-reform and the other against it. The minus-two formula has become the centre of all the reform proposals. It is true that the two Begums i.e. Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina failed completely to fulfill people's expectations. They are not democratic and have endorsed all the corruption and irregularities carried out by their party men and family members. It has also been learnt that they themselves were

involved in various irregularities. One of the propositions of rule of law states that no one is above the law. Accordingly, the two women are also not above the law. The government appears to be willing to take action against the two leaders as per the law of the land. As part of it, Sheikh Hasina has been arrested. But there appears to be some doubt as to the credibility of government's action. For example: the government did not take any action against those who went to the street distributing sweets and bringing out processions.

The reformists appear to be overenthusiastic about the exclusion of the two leaders. However, the government has to be careful about them, as they did not dare to speak a single word against the two leaders when they were in power. Any action by them at that time could have made the situation totally different. These pro-reform leaders appear to be spineless. The government must ensure whether those leaders are clean and not corrupt. Otherwise, when the situation changes those leaders might take a u-turn.

It is true that the two Begums are responsible for their failure in governing the country.

Peace loving citizens of the country would definitely not want to go back to the democracy existing prior to 11/1.

**Moinul Alam**  
*Eskaton Garden Road, Dhaka*

## Hasina's track record

This is the ex-PM, who at the fag end of her tenure, allotted one of the prestigious state buildings as her personal residence!

This is the ex-PM who frequently visited the US for weeks together.

This is the ex-PM who signed a document of understanding with the fundamentalist extreme right.

This is the ex-PM who trampled the democratic rights of millions of citizens by enforcing hartal (hartal is supposed to be voluntary!)

This is the ex-PM who left the country during a very crucial time (pre-1/11 negotiations). Had those negotiations succeeded, there would have been no 1/11. In fact, her arch nemesis, Khaleda, did the same.

This is the ex-PM who shouted for but never practised democracy in her own party forums.

**Mohammad Aktaruzzaman, MD (Dr. Zaman)**  
*Board Certified in Allergy & Immunology, Wake Forest North Carolina*

# National ID

A Bengali daily published a very important report on the above subject. It appears that 22 facilities to be available have been tied up with the NID card. If it becomes a mandatory law for all Bangladeshi citizens at home and abroad, a number of anticipated hurdles would have to be faced both by the government and the citizens who are supposed to have and produce the NID card for those 22 facilities. These include some fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution to a citizen of Bangladesh. Therefore one would expect that the government is fully aware of the various pros and cons of the proposed ordinance which would require confirmation by the next parliament. It is also necessary to clearly define and delineate the functions of the issuing agency and the recipient of the NID card.

The purpose of witting this letter is to request the media for a critical analysis from people's perspective of the benefits, bottlenecks and responsibility so that this is seen as a pro-people law. Here one can refer to the Special Powers Act, 1974 which is very controversial but yet to outlive its utility. In the backdrop of these opinions of mine, I would like to mention a few issues for the consideration of the government:

a. This is going to be a very far reaching law affecting the life of 150 million Bangladeshis at home and abroad. The government would naturally get the draft law vetted by

an independent institution like the Law Commission to avoid any contradiction between the proposed law and the constitution of Bangladesh.

b. The volume of work in enormous. It would be necessary to draw a complete plan of work with necessary flexibility for adjustment as it goes alone. One would expect an ongoing and decentralized operation with multiple units doing the actual work, duly supervised, with monitoring and reporting by the central authority.

c. At this moment the country is passing through a very critical transition period. The government is committed to minimizing corruption and its scope. Therefore, one wonders whether this kind of project might, I repeat might, open a new window for corruption due to a number of state facilities tagged to the NID card.

Vigilance and a close watch on a possible negative fallout of the project will be required.

**A reader**  
*On e-mail*

