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The editor reserves the right to edit a letter for clarity and length.

# LETTERS

## WORKING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

# RISKS TO HEALTH OF KLIA CLEANING STAFF

**B** EING a Bangladeshi university academic, I am happy to chat with Bangladeshis who work in shops, grocery stores and petrol stations.

I try to understand their life, experiences and challenges they face in a foreign land. I learn a lot from their struggles and am humbled by the beauty of their simplicity.

Recently, I went to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) for an overseas trip. I was satisfied with the toilet's cleanliness. I had a chat with a Bangladeshi cleaner standing there with his cleaning tools.

At the toilet, I found the smell of cleaning chemicals unbearable. I also asked why he was standing at the toilet even though everything was tidy.

I was shocked by his response. He told me that he worked a 12-hour shift every day. Excluding the one-hour break, he had to stand the remaining 11 hours.

If the supervisor came and didn't

see him standing in the "right" position, he would face financial and other penalties.

He told me that the exposure to strong smells of chemicals for long hours made him nauseous. Worse, it ruined his appetite and affected his eating habits.

He told me about his economic vulnerability, how his parents and younger siblings in Bangladesh were dependent on what he earned in Kuala Lumpur. In terms of alternative employment, he didn't have good prospects. What he told me made me sombre and pensive. I left and headed for the boarding gate.

On board the plane to Tokyo's Haneda airport, I couldn't forget the image of him standing with his cleaning tools and breathing the chemical-infested air at the toilet. I also thought of his family members who were dependent on his earnings.

I became concerned about the long-term impact the smell of the

toilet would have on his health and wellbeing.

If the working environment harms his health, reduces his wellbeing or impairs his ability to carry out his family responsibilities, what will happen to his parents, siblings and his future wife and children?

The toilets at Haneda were no less clean than at KLIA, but I didn't see any cleaner standing with cleaning implements and breathing the chemical-infested air. The cleaners there visited the toilets at regular intervals to make sure that they were clean, hygienic and well-maintained.

At airports and other facilities, what we need is cleanliness and hygiene, not the continuous presence of the cleaning staff. It's not wise or ethical to force them to stand in toilets for hours.

**DR MD MAHMUDUL HASAN**  
International Islamic University  
Malaysia

## 'MALAYSIAN TIME'

# VIPs should set the standard for punctuality

**INSTANCES** of prominent figures arriving late for meetings, dinners, and conferences are common. The practice of these very important persons (VIPs) squandering the time of others needs to be addressed.

"Malaysian time" must be put to rest.

Efficient time management is pivotal to boosting productivity and efficiency.

When a VIP keeps 1,000 delegates waiting for even 15 minutes, thousands of work hours are squandered.

Excuses such as traffic congestion lose their credibility when tardiness becomes habitual.

Apologies don't rectify the loss of productive hours or boost efficiency.

Little effort is made to remind the VVIPs about their need to be punctual next time. Few are willing to address the issue directly.

This culture of tardiness permeates even sports and social events. I recently attended a Chinese dinner at a prominent restaurant.

I arrived at 6.55pm with a foreign friend who insisted on being on time.

**Excuses such as traffic congestion lose their credibility when tardiness becomes habitual.**

Despite the invitation starting the event starts at 7pm, we were the first arrivals. Others trickled in as late as 9pm.

It's disheartening that our society, especially guests, accept such behaviour as normal.

It is taken for granted by all that the dinner will start later than the stipulated time, so why be on time?

The "being on time" culture must be promoted, and our VIPs should lead the charge.

**DR POLA SINGH**  
Kuala Lumpur

## DANGEROUS

# M-cyclists on main roads, highways pose a threat

**THE** authorities should be lauded for its efforts to educate motorists on road transportation laws.

Hitting them in their pockets will make them learn their lessons and turn them into law-abiding citizens.

There is, however, another kind of law-breaking situation.

I'm referring to motorcyclists not using motorcycle lanes but main roads and highways instead. They threaten the safety of other vehicles by being on roads and highways.

The authorities should do the same enforcement blitz on these motorcyclists, which may lead to a drop in accidents involving the latter.

**LIAMSI M.S.**  
Shah Alam, Selangor



The authorities should issue summonses to motorcyclists riding on highways. PIC BY ZULFADHLI ZULKIFLI