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Traffic jam & old vehicles

The BRTA is reportedly planning to withdraw 15 years old cars and other old vehicles from Dhaka city as one of the measures to ease traffic congestion. The reason for traffic congestion in Dhaka is not old vehicles only. The main reasons are road condition, excessive number of vehicles, mishandling by traffic police, ignorance of traffic rules, excessive number of pedestrians

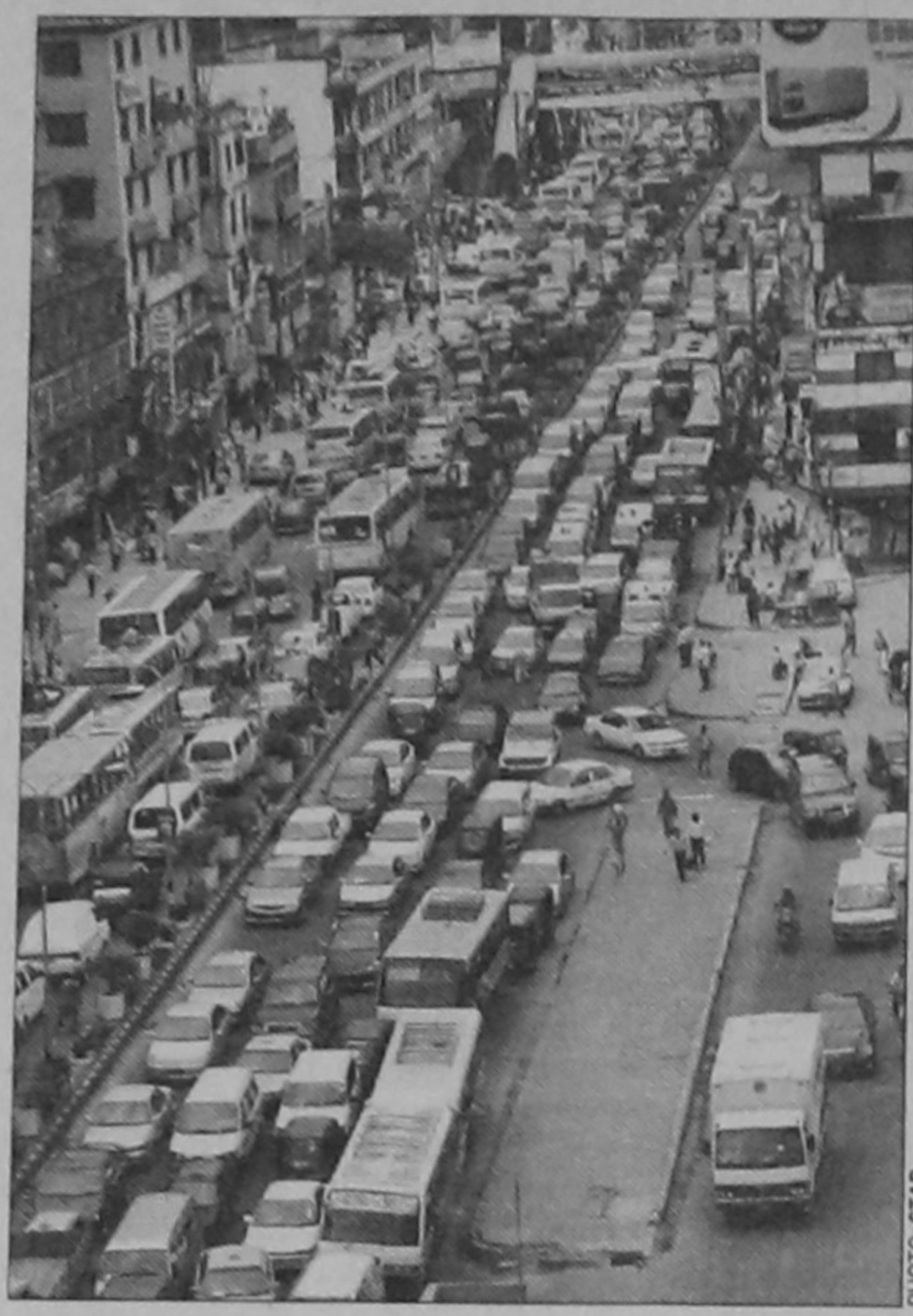


PHOTO: STAR

and their crossing of roads indiscriminately, contrasting speed of vehicles and in many areas rickshaws, narrow spaces of roads and by-lanes etc.

I think old cars are one of the minor reasons. So, attacking old cars as the main culprit for traffic jam will not bring much change in the present situation. The gigantic problem of Dhaka is, in fact, the population.

Why has the BRTA made the old cars their first target? Many of the old car owners belong to middle or lower middle-income groups. They have bought these cars with their meagre income.

After buying these vehicles they have altered many parts including engine which are available in Dhaka. With his old car the man is carrying his children to and from schools and then going to his workplace. If his old car is road-worthy, he cannot be denied his right of travelling in his city. If the transport authorities implement this biased policy, it will be a violation of his rights as a citizen of Dhaka.

The owners of old cars also pay the same road taxes as the new car owners do. I am sure the government is not taking the old vehicles and providing the owners with a new one. If it is so, then there is no problem. But I am pretty sure the government is not doing that.

The action will also put more than 90% of the Dhakaites in a dangerous situation, because there are only a few CNG run taxicabs and engine-run rickshaws. Most of the time these private vehicles refuse to go to the destinations the passengers want them to; rickshaws are not allowed in many roads. I believe if the running old cars are not allowed, more than 90% of the Dhakaites will have no transport to move.

The government should introduce enough transports for both short and long distances, improve public transport situation, educate the traffic police, renovate bad roads and then withdraw the old vehicles. Otherwise, there will be a disaster.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Sri Lankan scene

Let us have a look at the political situation of Sri Lanka. The final outcome of the 26 years of separatist war against the Tamil Tigers in the far north-east of the country has gained much media attention.

The government of Sri Lanka claims to be highly committed and has expressed their commitment towards the peace talk. It is very difficult to justify the claim of the Sri Lankan government. Press freedom in Sri Lanka has shrunk since 2006. Reporters without borders expressed alarm at the statement by Sarath Fonseka, the army chief. He cautioned that journalists who visited areas formerly controlled by the Tamil Tigers would be prosecuted. Journalists still have no free access to the camps where 300,000 Tamil civilians have been interned. It must be noted that at least 20 Sri Lankan journalists have fled after receiving death threats and 14 have been killed since the beginning of the military campaign to crush the Tamil Tigers in 2006. Others have been arbitrarily arrested and tortured or disappeared while in custody. (Source 2nd June 2009, The Times).

Recently, a Sri Lankan court sentenced an ethnic Tamil journalist to 20 years in prison. Through this sentence once again the government proved to be hostile towards the press. Why does the Sri Lankan government feel scared of journalists? How long would they continue their autocracy?

It is the responsibility of the international community to keep an eye upon Sri Lanka, so

that the common people, especially innocent Tamils, do not face any kind of ill-treatment.

Pradip Das
A novelist
Dhaka

Garbage disposal

When we lived in Germany from 1974 till 1985 we had the following way of disposing our daily rubbish: there was this so called "dustbin" where we had to throw in our "kitchen rubbish". And next to it there was a smaller "dustbin" where we had to dispose of every kind of plastic material, such as plastic bags or bottles, and there was still a smaller "dustbin" next to it, where we had to throw in any kind of finished batteries.

But here in our country I always have a great problem of what to do with my empty plastic bottles or plastic bags, and especially also with any kinds of finished batteries. These all finally end up in the "general rubbish bin". There is no alternative!

Luise Rafique
South Central Road
Khulna

Sartorial restrictions

The news was carried in the national dailies that an office order is under process for imposing a ban on wearing suit in the government offices during the hot months of the year. The purpose of this order is to save electricity by not using ACs in government offices. Earlier, the government introduced daylight saving time (DST) by pulling

the clock forward by one hour which has been a futile exercise. Instead of saving electricity the change of time has created a lot of confusions and problems for the citizens from different walks of life. A number of news items and write-ups are being published in different dailies to withdraw DST system.

Wearing suit is the choice and a fundamental right of a citizen. No one can forbid someone from wearing a moderate dress of his choice. Wearing suit makes a person smart and it is an internationally recognized dress. Stopping this all of a sudden might not be accepted by all.

The government has the right to issue orders not to run the AC in the offices for the purpose of saving electricity. If the directive is issued then it is mandatory for everybody to abide by it. When ACs are stopped then the officers will automatically change their dress, if they feel necessary. But the ban on suit sounds ridiculous. The government should give it a second thought.

Matin Bin Zahir
Trishal, Mymensingh

Dealing with extremists

The State Minister of Home Affairs has recently announced that the government would welcome it if extremists decide to surrender voluntarily and take necessary steps in accordance with the provisions of law. Since in the eye of law those persons are dubbed as criminals against whom murder and other cases

are there; the only step as per the existing law the authorities perhaps could take was to arrest them upon surrender and put them on trial. But this process perhaps would not be acceptable to them. Instead, they would first seek a general amnesty before surrender. As such the announcement though apparently was a good gesture but left many questions unanswered. At present there is no government policy or law to rehabilitate them. A few years back a large number of such extremists operating in the southern districts surrendered under a general amnesty to the authorities with the hope of starting a new life as law-abiding citizens of the country. The authorities also reportedly absorbed some of them in the Police and Ansar departments in different cadres. But later it was reported in the newspaper that most of them deserted their workplace and rejoined their old profession and many of them as alleged, even fled away with firearms provided to them by the state. Perhaps it was not proper to appoint them in armed cadres and hand over any arms to them.

Moreover, the reason of their desertion could be that they were looked down with suspicion by their new comrades or perhaps even were not accepted as their fellow colleagues. Therefore, the entire programme ended in a fiasco. Before embarking upon a similar programme a very critical analysis is required to be made of what went wrong with the programme and what were the mistakes committed by the

authorities that led to the failure of the programme and what the government policy would be in such cases. It is also now reported that the pirates operating in the Sundarbans and the Bay of Bengal areas also expressed their willingness to come out of the underworld and surrender provided a general amnesty was granted. Therefore, the issue must be taken very seriously with a view to finding a permanent solution to the problem. Thereafter a suitable declaration may come from the government asking them to surrender, detailing their formal rehabilitation process under a legal cover. It is essential that they go through a rigorous physical, mental, economic and religious rehabilitation programme, so that they could also mentally adjust themselves to their normal life as law-abiding citizens.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque
One-mail

Saifur Rahman's passing

Saifur Rahman was one of the top accounting professionals brought to the political arena by the late President Ziaur Rahman. President Zia vowed to make politics difficult for politicians. Induction of non-political persons was one of the tools used to achieve this goal. The results were far from positive. Most of such inductees proved themselves to be highly corrupt, maybe slightly smarter than the grassroots politicians.

Saifur Rahman appeared a lot better in his earlier tenures. But in the 2002-07 term his reputation dwindled badly.

Outspoken
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Investors

Some investors from abroad who can not arrive in due time at home face a problem regarding their investment in SANCHAYPATRA because the rule is this that you must renew the SANCHAYPATRA on the date when it expires its maturity and if not renewed then onwards there will be no interest paid on the instrument, even for years. Thus the investor faces a huge loss of interest on their investment in this sector. On the other hand, at home thousands face the problem when they forget to remember the date and make time to go for the renewal. The authorities should re-think about this and make arrangement to have the option of AUTO-RENEWAL system which now prevails in all banking sector in the case of FDR where the FDR is automatically renewed when it expires at present rate of interest.

A national daily informs that there is a law of auto-renewal of SANCHAYPATRA but is not practiced and when inquired at the office of SANCHAYPATRA, they were not aware of this rule as reported. Thus they do not auto-renew SANCHAYPATRA causing losses to investors.

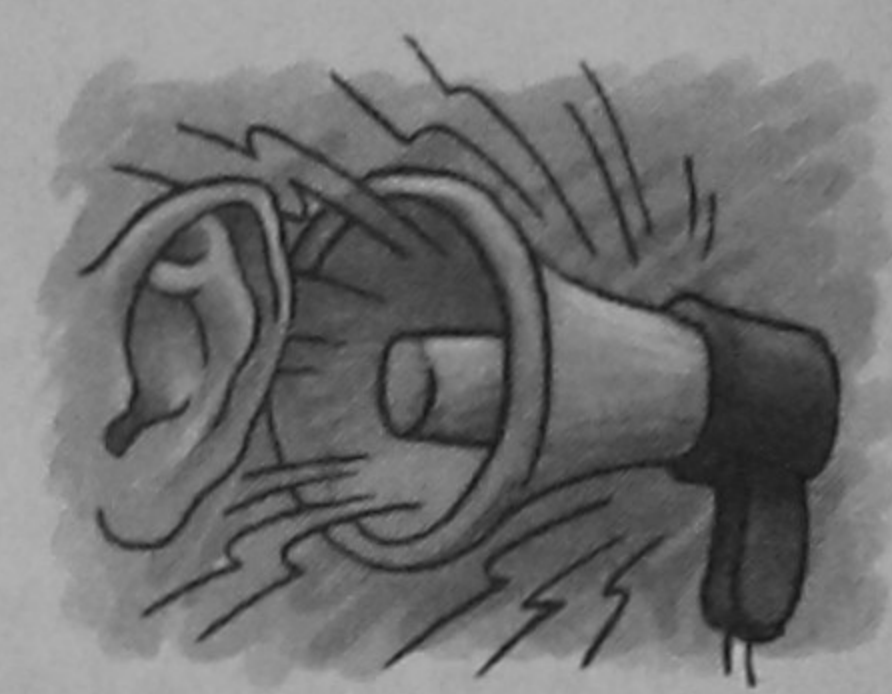
I do not understand why the rule cannot be like that of FDR at the banks. In that case

Check noise pollution

I strongly support the resolution recently adopted by 'Sundar Jibon' and 'Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children (SAHIC)' demanding that the authorities check noise pollution and give rights to the affected people to file cases against the polluters.

Not only children but also people of all ages are being subjected to noise pollution usually generated by horns, brick-breaking, piling machines, etcetera. Some people are using these in such an irrational way as if none around them are humans or reserve any right to go for legal action against the polluters.

I think that the government should take stringent measures to control noise pollution particularly in and around the residential areas, hospitals, educational institutions, etc. The



patrol police and Rab units may be entrusted with the responsibility at least to warn people engaged in carelessly contributing to noise pollution.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

the investors from abroad will invest more in this sector as there will be no fear of losing their interest from the invested SANCHAYPATRA if they fail to renew it while they are absent from home.

Dr Md. Shameem Hessian
New DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Banned drugs

Recently quite a few children have lost their lives after taking paracetamol products. Such drugs have been banned by the government. The people in rural areas might be illiterate and may not have access to TV or radio and thus be unaware of the ban, but what about the doctors who are still prescribing these banned medicines?

They are anything but illiterate! They do not have any excuse and therefore, must face the consequences for causing these unfortunate deaths.

To my mind, the doctors prescribing these drugs and the pharmacies selling them must be held accountable and prosecuted and given deterrent punishment, otherwise this practice will not stop.

Abul Mohsin
Siddheswari Circular Road
Dhaka

Ramadan and our duties

The DS "Lifestyle" section of 01 Sept had a very commendable list of what we all could do, this and indeed, every Ramadan. I would slightly disagree on only one action. "Giving an umbrella to the Traffic Controllers, who spend a lot of gruelling time in sun and rain directing traffic".

In normal circumstances, I would be all for it, because I consider them to be one of the most hardworking people standing out in the smog amidst the pandemonium of gridlocks for long hours (12-16 hours) without adequate food, sleep, rest or remuneration. They are for the most part, in my personal experience, simple countrymen with heaps of sympathy for the down-trodden. But please reflect on the job they are

FORCED to do by their superiors.

First, they have to keep the roads, streets and lanes clear so that the lakhs of stretched-out Gas Guzzling Monstrosities of the 1-2% privileged class have free access for their licensed/unlicensed, fit/unfit, taxed/untaxed, empty/half-empty vehicles driven by genuine/fake licensed drivers. Next, they have to turn a blind eye to these GCMs parked illegally here, there and everywhere. Then they are required to kowtow and salute whenever a superior, flagged or an important looking/expensive car passes by and see to its free access (even if it is empty).

Now we come to the unpleasant part. First they are ORDERED to strike a telling blow to the livelihood of about 20-25 lakh rickshaw-related people by forcibly denying them their constitutional rights of free access to public roads. Worse, they deny the same rights to 40-50 lakh Dhakabashis by forcibly ejecting the old, women, children, disabled, ill, infirm and those going home with some iftari, from their rickshaws on the so-called rickshaw-free roads. I have seen the sympathy in the eyes of most of them while they puncture/seize rickshaws. Will they ever, if they still have a conscience, be able to respect their superiors by forcing their own countrymen to kneel, grovel and plead with them for their daily bread?

Lastly, we come to the few conscienceless people who ORDER the cops to take such drastic, anti-people, repressive and unconstitutional action. They are after all enjoying to the hilt the lavish facilities

ties given to them at public, company or corporate expense. Please, NBR, is this not another way to cheat on taxes?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Thirty years of BNP

There is a popular saying in Bengali "Jonmo houk jotha totha kormo houk bhalo" which could have been said about the BNP, the party which ran the country for 15 years. For a thirty years old party its nothing but the story of sheer success.

There has been much debate on the birth of BNP with no positivism from any corner, even nobody denies the fact that in the next election if the government changes it won't be any party other than the BNP. Common people are never concerned about the birth of the BNP as long as it delivers; question of birth comes only with the miserable failure of delivering.

It is for the good of our country that the BNP comes forward to make the people have dream of good days. Party leadership has to be visionary and the vision can only be manufactured by seeing Bangladesh 25 years from now if not more.

The country needs constructive politics and only long term bipartisan politics can augment the growth. To stand back to the strength, the BNP has to find the good things whatever little it had done and "Ziaur Rahman" needs to be brought again in the front. The strength of selfless, simple Zia will always hypnotize the people.

Md. Kalim Ullah
Dilu Road, New Eskaton
Dhaka

Opposition and JS



PHOTO: STAR

The third session of the 9th JS started on September 7. As was anticipated, the main opposition is continuing the boycott that they began in the previous session (budget). The budget was passed without the opposition scrutiny. Now some more important issues are haunting the nation. Some of those are deteriorating law and order (though the home ministry doesn't realize this), unabated price hike, monopoly in tender business, and lastly partisan promotion in the administration. But why does the opposition continue the boycott bypassing the interests of their voters and the nation as a whole? Is the opposition doing it very illogically? I don't think so. The issue of seating arrangement has been wrong both ways. The last speaker gave all the front seats to the opposition perhaps deliberately; and the present speaker has done a wrong computation. He and his colleagues counted the Jatiya Party (JP) in the opposition and gave a few front seats to them. How funny! Everybody knows JP is the second major component of the so-called grand alliance; their seats must logically be on the Treasury side. However, if there are not sufficient seats in the Treasury Bench, the JP can borrow some seats from the back of the Opposition Bench. The Speaker and the Treasury MPs must correct this computational error, provide some more front seats to the opposition and call them generously to come and to debate national issues. The call should be such that the JS can do nothing in the opposition's absence, shunning a stance that they don't care much if the opposition joins or not.

I am confident that such a gesture will break the stalemate and the opposition will join parliament sessions shortly.

MAS Molla
Life member, BAAS, Dhaka

Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thedailystar.net to leave your comments.

The men who killed Sheikh Mujib? (September 4, 2009)

High-profile assassinations are mostly left unresolved in most countries. But nowhere has there been so much politics surrounding the death of a politician. We as a nation should reach a consensus as to how we could put an end to this endless business of politicising a tragedy.

Raihan Sharif

For those who can read between the lines, the writer has said more than he wrote. Excellent presentation of cause and context.

DMK

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman throttled democracy and sealed all doors of any peaceful transfer of power by creating a one party state.

Rezina Rahman

Why a whole brave nation became a quiet observer? Why did the nation empower them to do everything? A brave nation turned into a coward nation?

Shahin

If General Shafiullah is trying to prove that he had nothing to do with Mujib's killing, I am ready to buy it. But if he is

trying to claim that he has done nothing wrong, then I have an issue. I think then everybody should have an issue with him.

He failed to save the life of one of the greatest leaders of all time.

Sourav Ahmed

So what was Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf's role in the killing? I thought he was a favourite of Sheikh Mujib and was next in line for the army chief's job. Why would he want to kill Bangabandhu?

Arslan Mahmud

A good analysis. In a way we all pulled the trigger, because after a handful of army officers killed Bangabandhu, the entire country submitted to them. It's a stain on our national character that might take a river of blood to wash.

Taher Chowdhury

The people of Bangladesh are emotional and sentimental but NOT stupid-they will punish the Awami League if it does not carry out its election pledges. This time the BNP got only 30 seats for betraying the country and if the Awami

League betrays the country, then the same fate awaits them.

Sadia

Having been a second generation Bengali living in the UK and learning recently of the current political climate concerning the assassination of Sheikh Mujib, I feel the political climate surrounding this tragedy is not only tearing apart Bangladesh politically and socially but most importantly not letting Bangladesh as a country to develop its economy.

Areeb Ullah

Superb analysis...

Shahriar Jamil

Are Mujib's killers going to be punished during this tenure of the Awami League? The matter should be resolved without further delay.

Waliullah

We have shed the blood of the father of this nation. This is our cardinal sin and unless we repent for it, this sin is going to haunt us for years to come.

Rifat Shams Haider Chowdhury

What is the use of jabbing General Shafiullah after all these years? Yes, he proved to be less than heroic, and so are many leaders of our country. What I think he lacks is decency. He has served under the killers, all the way to the time of Ershad.

Fahmida Khan

Excellent and cogent! If I were General Shafiullah, I would have heeded the piece of advice Badrul Ahsan has given. I would stop digging and try to manage the hole without creating new issues. He has avoided the grilling all these years. He should thank his luckystars!

Obaidul Islam Muneer

The piece is simply excellent in its content, analysis and language, an extraordinary contribution.

Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury

Thanks, Badrul Ahsan. Although one of the readers says you have narrated a story already known to many, some of the facts are new to me. It's a great piece to remind the new generation of a dark chapter in their history.

Shilpi Dutta