

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
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## It serves the party in power, not justice

### The amended Speedy Trial Law

**W**E are deeply disappointed by the House's passing of the Law and Order Disruption (Speedy Trial Amendment) Bill, 2018 that has raised the jail term to seven years from five. The reason for our discomfiture is the intention behind passing this bill at this time. There is little doubt that this law has been passed not with the intention to serve the public better, but for political reasons—something we have also seen happen during previous regimes of both AL and BNP.

The Law in question was originally framed in 2002 and at that time this paper had criticised it for the same reason. In fact, as we had expressed our fear in an editorial at that time, various incarnations of this law have been introduced by successive governments—first by BNP then by AL then again by BNP.

It is an irony that AL, which had criticised the law in 2002 enacted by the BNP, has not only ensured its perpetuation, but increased the severity of the punishment also. It is equally ironical that the BNP is now crying hoarse against it.

Not the cause of justice but political chastisement has been the underlying motive behind enacting the law. The way the jail terms have been increased with each regime change makes this intention clear.

Speedy trial is the demand of justice, and all courts must ensure that. But such motivated special dispensation does not serve the cause of justice but only the party in power. We urge the government to scrap a law that only serves to act as an instrument of political suppression, and instead focus on the timely disposal of all litigations.

## What type of person beats up a teacher?

### Outrageous act!

**I**T appears that assaulting teachers is becoming a way of life with some people. In Narayanganj in May 2016 a headmaster was instantly punished, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about religion, and the horrendous act was carried out under the supervision of a sitting member of parliament. This time round, a female teacher was beaten with a shoe by a guardian for refusing to tutor his granddaughter. The perpetrator has been arrested by the police. The person in question hails from Narayanganj too and ironically, is a political figure.

The arrestee apparently went to the teacher's house accompanied by his wife, who was the one to make the request earlier, but was refused by the teacher, and also threatened to electrocute her. In any other country mere threat is a crime and people are hauled up in court for it. We have stooped so low that it is perfectly alright for the powerful in society to mete out their version of justice for being "insulted".

Any teacher is well within his or her right to refuse to tutor anyone. In days gone by, teachers were held in high esteem in society. They were considered the repository of knowledge; individuals who were looked up to and treated with respect as makers of society's future leaders. Given our recent experiences, times have changed drastically. Society as a whole has become inured to such behavior.

There have to be safeguards against such outrageous acts. The alleged perpetrator deserves the severest of punishment. Without that, we are silently acquiescing in the mistreatment of teachers and making it an acceptable form of behaviour.



RUBANA HUQ

**KNOT SO TRUE**

**T**HE response of your columnist to the question "How are you?" usually ranged from "Dhuro" back in the teen years to more currently "Could be better"/"Couldn't be better"/"Couldn't have asked for more."

Basically starting from my teen years' frustration stemming from the inability to spot massive bundles of happiness down to this minute of having been pushed to live without people who I couldn't imagine going through life without, life has happened. While we, the infantile egomaniacs, often don't have the capacity to perceive the wholeness when and as we experience in our youth, and while our youth allows us

# All Over Again

This week I am more alive than I ever was just because I was part of a youth assembly in Cox's Bazar. These were young people who had nothing to earn materially; these were young people who just happened to be volunteering for JAAGO Foundation.

I met JAAGO way back in 2008. Back then Korvi Rakshand looked like a young man with an insatiable appetite to enrich impoverished kids through English-medium schooling, with the help of other young people from all backgrounds. After a decade, this young man and his young volunteers are still standing by the spirit of JAAGO. Many young people continue to be associated with this foundation with pride, in one way or another. All of them believe that giving is the only way to earn life.

Therefore, I salute Youth. I salute platforms like JAAGO that allow me the opportunity to look at two fifth graders (both are called Sumaiya) who have watched poor people die in want of

The parents of most of these kids are farmers, day labourers in construction sites, garment workers or shopkeepers. Earlier, the JAAGO children, almost in scripted formats, dreamt of becoming pilots and doctors. Notice how their narrative has evolved today. Instead of wanting to just become doctors, they now want to own hospitals; build aircrafts instead of just becoming pilots; and boldly bat and spin balls. With time and encouragement, their dreams have transitioned to the next phase. That is where we come in. That is where we need to come in and live through their lives which otherwise will have little or no meaning...

Just the other day, I watched a film, *Saints of Sin*, which features eight women telling their own stories coupled with wonderful music by artists from here. With Anusheh, Palki, Armeen, and others singing from their own depths, the plot made sense. Shot with mostly one camera and edited with limited resources, the

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Youth-led platforms like JAAGO Foundation allow children to dream bigger.

PHOTO: STAR

to max with moping, grey hair can only make space for happiness.

Having greyed enough, I now confront darkness by being hopeful while the rays stream through my shutters at the crack of dawn. My awakenings sustain optimism. I am doubly awake when I sense youth and feel nature in the palm of my hands. And a combination of both gives me the compulsion to live life till the very last minute.

medicine and who now dream of becoming doctors and owning hospitals where poor patients are to be treated at no cost. Kudos to the 10-year-old Yeasin, the fourth grader, who wants to be an engineer and build aircrafts; or the sixth grader Hanzala who spins his ball with passion and wants to be like the all-rounder Mashrafe Mortaza someday and is now applying to be included in the Kalabagan Sporting Club.

movie has jerks while switching from one shot to another. The movie also has audio glitches. But most importantly, in the documentary, we hear women speaking of vanity, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. We watch each of them admit their sins and share their stories. Their admissions do not free them, but then again, they are not asking to be forgiven either...

I interviewed Asma Jahangir 10

years ago while she was crossing the Wagah border by foot, en route to India to take part in a massive gathering of activists championing human rights. The first woman to serve as the President of Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan, Asma crossed all barricades, faced batons, questioned eligibility of General Pervez Musharraf as a presidential poll candidate, sided with Iftikhar Chaudhry in his battle against Musharraf, and instantly turned against the same set of lawyers when they applauded the assassin of the Punjab Governor Salman Taseer.

Within our own borders, many Asmas strive to exist and aspire to soar to newer heights. But these young women routinely come to life and die violent deaths with many of us just taking part in processions and candlelight vigils. If we continue being this complicit, then many of our very own Asma Jahangirs will fight a lonely battle; and many law students like the 27-year-old Rupa Khatun will continue to be raped and killed in moving buses for many more years to come.

Thus we owe it to Life to go beyond our own prisms and support causes, and scream our lungs out for the rights of the impoverished and the unsung. For all of us living in comfort and wisdom, our lives should continue to be about touching these lives in any manner or form we can afford. Only then will we rise above our own disappointments and losses. Only then will the tragedies serve their purpose and morph into positive energies. Only then we shall all begin to breathe...yet all over again.

Rubana Huq is the managing director of Mohammadi Group.

# A technological intervention for urban mobility

*The good news is that there is an alternative to a world that looks like a parking lot and moves like a traffic jam. It's a world where more people share rides and take public transit.*



PRABJEET SINGH

**D**HAKA'S congested on and traffic problems are no secret. Transportation woes and endless jams account for great economic loss, and take up 3.2 million

working hours per day according to a recent World Bank analysis.

A little more than a year ago, Uber was launched with the vision of helping reduce congestion by providing an alternative to individual car ownership. As the popularity of ridesharing apps continues to grow, we believe that technology can pave a path for sustainability in Dhaka.

Ridesharing technology in Dhaka has drawn the attention of the government, media and civil society in a way like never before. The good news is that there is an alternative to a world that looks like a parking lot and moves like a traffic jam. It's a world where more people share rides and take public transit. The question is: How do we build on the strong start we have made in Dhaka? Reconfiguring the stressed and overburdened urban mobility landscape is necessary, not only for the sake of productivity but also for the quality of life for the present and future residents of Dhaka.

Combating a widespread culture of personal car ownership is one way of looking at decongesting Dhaka and easing its traffic burdens. The unfolding transition to shared, zero-emission, and

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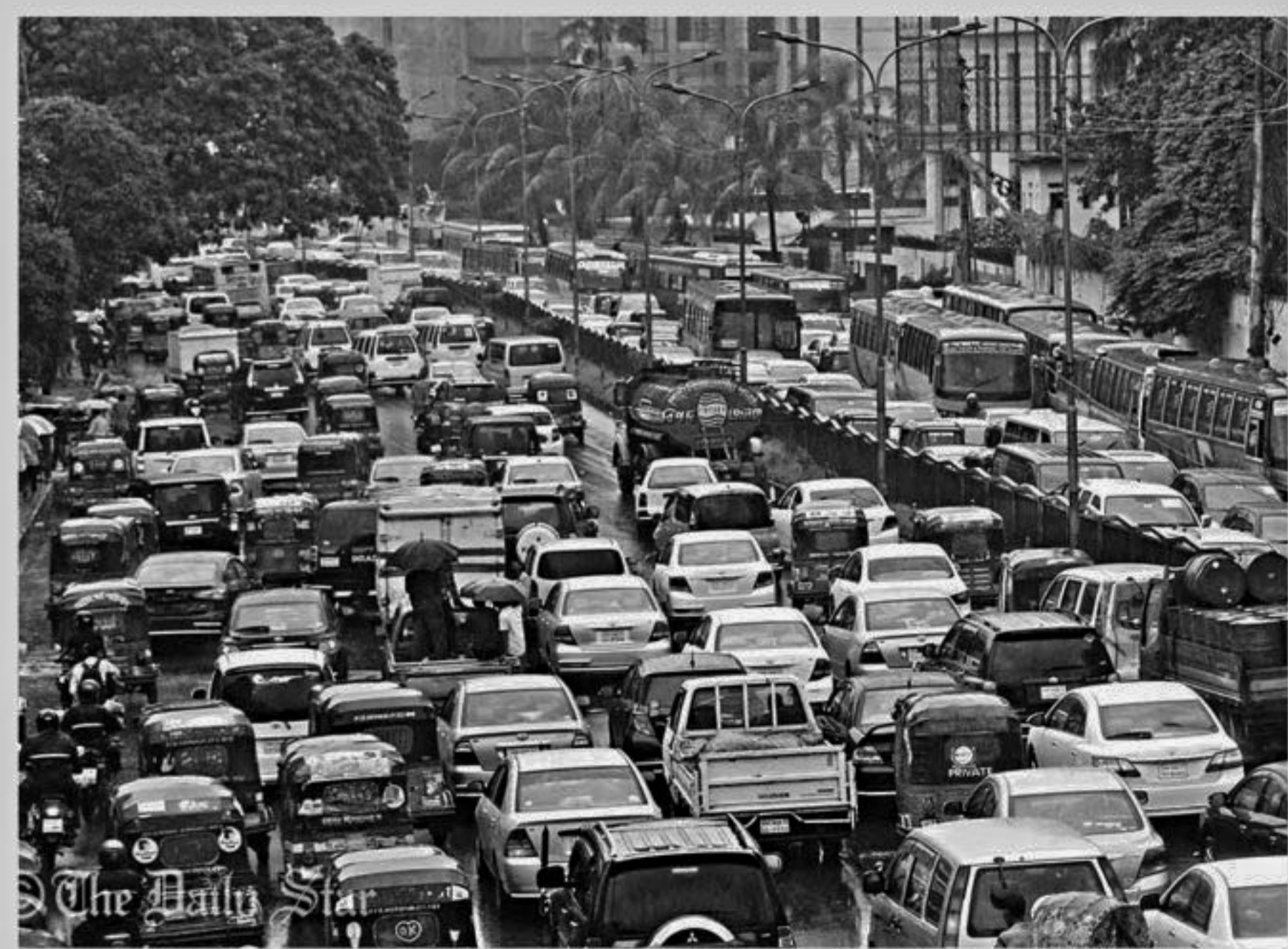


PHOTO: STAR

ultimately autonomous vehicles stands to have a big impact on citizens, businesses, their investments and livelihoods. Technology-driven social change is what we are aiming for, as people look at ridesharing with more trust. That trust will only grow when these mobility services are a better alternative than private car ownership. Our belief is that, accessible public transit in conjunction with on-demand ridesharing services can help disincentivise personal car ownership.

Our world has over a billion cars on the roads, and 96 percent of the time they go unutilised. Ridesharing can change the way Dhaka moves as

utilisation of existing cars goes up, replacing the need for personal cars with the on-demand nature of the service. As more riders choose ridesharing services, in conjunction with a robust public transportation system, resources like cars, road space and time all stand to get better utilisation.

To be honest, when our founders started Uber, they weren't thinking about any of this. They were just excited about the idea that you could press a button on your smartphone and have a car turn up. It was only once Uber got going—and ridesharing took off—that we began to understand that today's

transportation status quo is insufficient, inefficient and unequal.

Countries around the world are waking up to the potential of technology in solving urban congestion and traffic issues. We are encouraged by the increasing trust placed on the role of ridesharing in urban planning and mobility. The path to technological intervention in urban mobility is paved by a strong collaboration between technology players, government stakeholders and citizens. This is sure to make a difference.

Prabjeet Singh is Regional General Manager, India (North/East/West) and South Asia, Uber.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Separate lane for VIPs unrealistic

The proposal for constructing a separate lane for the VIPs in Dhaka has stirred debate. It is simply not possible to add a separate new lane to the existing road network. This VIP-lane theory, intended to reduce traffic congestion of the city, has already garnered harsh criticism from both experts and citizens.

I think it will be a wise decision for the government to take measures to better manage the city's traffic. Our policymakers must think about all residents of the city instead of a powerful few.

Mahsab Hossain Rony, Dhaka

### Public sector and LPG

There's no denying that the government has made substantial progress in terms of reducing the energy gap of the country. In Dhaka, people now seldom experience load-shedding.

Over the years, extraction of natural gas has also increased, but it is yet to fulfil the current demand. The government has taken steps to import LNG to reduce the gap.

However, there's still a huge gap between demand and supply of LPG, which has mostly domestic uses. Private sector enterprises enjoy a monopoly in the LPG trade in our country. The government should start selling LPG so that consumers can get regular supply of it at a competitive price.

Md Ashraf Hossain, By e-mail