

# Rising Stars

Life hadn't been kind to Asif lately. He had had an extremely tough week at school, and living by his own, while his parents were abroad, hadn't been working out. He had reached that precarious age of 16, and felt that he was facing a "mid-teen" crisis. He longed for something new to do; something that nobody had done before.

The phone at Asif's side rang.

"Hello"

"Hey Asif, it's me Shayan. Has anything happened in the last 2 hours?"

"Nope"

"Oh, did you hear the news. There's going to be another hartal on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February?"

hands on some paint. I say we spray paint on everyone who comes out during the Hartal"

The first motion was passed unanimously.

"The next agenda is to decide what we are going to protest against."

"Let's have an eight point demand," said someone.

"Why an eight point demand?" asked Asif.

"No-one has ever called a Hartal for an eight point demand before."

Shayan interjected before Asif could say anything. "Let's not have too many demands. In that way we don't risk confusing ourselves. Whenever someone calls a Hartal for two many reasons they make such a mess of things that they have to redefine what they want. Look at our politician, do you think any of them could remember an eight-point demand? Try to list an eight-point demand and by the time you reach item number 7 you'll have forgotten what item number 1 was. Lets have the simplest demand possible."

"Which is?" asked Asif.

"A no-point demand"

"That's actually very appropriate since we aren't really asking for anything" mumbled Asif.

"Yeah, but that will make us look really stupid. Can you imagine going around the streets saying that we're calling a Hartal for a no point demand?"

"Then lets have the next simplest thing: a 1-point demand."

"But we still haven't decided what to ask for?"

There was a minute silence.

"It has to be something vague so that we don't accidentally get what we ask for!" Shayan said.

"How about: Our demand is to save the environment and stop the torture of all humanity."

Everybody nodded. That sounded VERY vague.

Soon everybody had heard of the Hartal called by Asif and his friends. As Hartal day approached Asif began to get progressively excited.

On the big day, Asif and his friends met at his house where Asif had announced that he would make a speech. At eight o'clock he stood up on a *mora* and said:

"Friends, Bangladesh's, and everyone else; A good day to you all. It has always been my dream that we, the young generation, will do something as praiseworthy as what we are doing today. Our forefathers dreamt that one-day, students like us would unite for some common cause. It is my dream that we should show the rest of Bangladesh that we are good for something; I dream that keeping this as an example we can do more useful things. After all we are simply just representing the desires expressed by common students from all walks of life. My dream has come true"

Asif could hear many people snickering, and Shayan whispered:

"Let's go easy on the dreams, or else you'll get nothing done, as usual"

Asif realized that he needed something to get the crowd of teenager's to clap for him. Luckily Shayan came to the rescue.

"Applause please" he shouted.

The crowd started clapping half-heartedly.

"Did I mention that there will be a celebration after the Hartal, for all you brave people", Asif said grandly.

Asif received the first standing ovation in his life.

As the day wore it became evident that the hartal was indeed a massive success. Through out the day Asif received photos of people drenched with paint. By six o'clock in the evening he had collected at least a hundred of such Photographs. Proudly Asif released a statement at the end of the day saying: "WE AREN'T JOKING!"

The next day Asif asked everyone to come over to his house. He congratulated all his followers, and said that he has had some posters printed, which would be put up on walls all over Dhaka.

A huge crowd of people has been assembling on front of Asif's house. Most of them were carrying and waving paint stained cloths. Asif looked down at the posters that he had made. The lines "We aren't joking" stared back at him. Asif could tell from the faces outside the gate that they weren't laughing either.

## Hartal!

By Simnan Abbas



Politicians, thought Asif, have nothing better to do than make me as miserable as possible.

Then a brilliant idea hit Asif. Why hadn't he thought of this before? As a matter of fact why hadn't anyone thought of this? Asif stopped to think for a moment, weighing the pro's and cons. Then he spoke:

"Hey Shayan, listen to this. According to the constitution of Bangladesh, it requires only 20 people or more to call a Hartal."

"Congratulations"

"No, don't you get it? We'll call our own Hartal."

"Yeah, have fun Asif, Call me back when you've finished."

"Why should politicians be the only ones who can call Hartals? The right to call a Hartal isn't something that they throw in with an "MP" at the end your name. It's our fundamental right to protest..."

"Protest against what?"

"You don't need something to complain about to call a Hartal. You just need something that sounds like protest. Name one time that a Hartal was called for some reason that you could make sense of"

"And why are you doing this? Do you think that they'll put credentials at the end of your name for calling a hartal: like Asif Amin CAH, CAH as In "called A Hartal."

"You stupid twit. Look at the advantages. We'd be really famous, it'll be something new to do, and better yet, we get to bunk school, and here's the best part: we get to make our politician look like what they really are, stupid."

Asif finally had Shayan's complete attention.

The next day Asif held a meeting with 25 of his friends.

"We have to decide on a few things today", Asif was saying. "What so we do during the Hartal?"

"Lets hold a procession", someone said.

"No, that's too much work."

Asif then was struck by another brilliant idea.

"Imran, your father owns a paint factory, get your

By A delirious demoniac

So what do I want to be? Frankly, I don't know. I have considered all the common jobs, checked out the pro's and con's of each and have finally reached the conclusion that I can't do any of these jobs.

When I was a toddler, my parents used to look appreciatively at my school grades. Overwhelmed with joy at seeing my superb results, they would encourage me to become a teacher. I was influenced and seriously considered becoming a teacher, but as I grew up and saw more of the world around me, no influence could persuade me to even dream of being a teacher. I don't want to pretend to be "the backbone of the society" and "the conscience of the society" when I, myself, would be indulging students to take private lessons at my home. I don't want to give a 100 percent to the student who I teach privately and a zero to the one I don't. I don't want to give out exam questions to my private students. I don't want to give sensational

recommendations to my private students and modest ones to the others. No, I can't be a teacher, I decided.

Friends suggested that I might consider being a doctor. "Okay, that sounds like a nice proposition", I thought. I set my heart to it and studied Biology seriously. Soon, I realized I was in the wrong track. I realized that I didn't want to give medication to only those who came to my private chamber or clinic and nothing to those poor, dying "hol polloi" at the public hospitals. I don't want to go on strikes that would jeopardize the lives of thousands. I don't want to perform a surgery on a patient, leave my scissors inside his stomach and stitch him up. I don't want to diagnose a man being pregnant. I don't want to diagnose a diarrhea patient as having aids. Nah, this wasn't my kind of a job.

Okay then. What can I become? I considered being an engineer, a civil engineer. There were problems in this job too. I don't want to build a structure that would collapse within hours of its making and kill hundreds of people. I don't want to build a road that would corrode in a matter of months. I don't want to build a dam that's supposed to last a hundred years but probably won't last even a hundred days. Well, I was out of luck here too!

Banker? Hmm, that seemed tenable. Accounting became my obsession. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for my obsession to become the object of my loathing. I don't want to give the people's money to a business tycoon so that he can voraciously engulf it all. I don't want to be at the root of the bank-default culture. I don't want to be a fat, clumsy bank-official who only prays to money and talks to bribes. I don't want to earn seven thousand as my monthly salary and seven Lac as monthly bribe. This just wasn't my kind of a job.

My teachers seemed relentless in finding out my hopes and aspirations for the future. Time after time, they'd ask me to write essays about this and every time, I'd submit blank pages. "Young man, do you want to tell me you don't want to be ANYTHING?" my English teacher screamed at me. I had to say something. So I said I wanted to be a police officer.

Being a police officer wasn't that bad I used to think back then. I would be able to maintain law and order in the country and be the beholder of justice. Soon I realized that those were far-fetched dreams; my dreams of being a cop vanished into thin air. I just wouldn't want to kill innocent students like Rubel. I wouldn't want to earn crores of Taka every month, send my children to the costliest universities abroad and have my own eight-storied apartment building and my Ferrari registered in my wife's name. I wouldn't want to be an accomplice of Ershad Sikder or Ershad the President Scum.

So I can't be a teacher; I can't be a doctor, engineer, banker or a cop. What do I want to be then? Let me tell you what I want to be. I want to be Ershad Sikder rather than being his slimy accomplice, Mr. Cop. I want to be Salman F Rahman and not his partner-in-crime, Mr. Banker. I'd want to be Ershad the President Scum, a hypocrite, rather than being a teacher and claiming to be Mr. Good.

I want to be a cadre at Dhaka University and shoot down other cadres. I want to be a criminal godfather and a pimp like Mirza Abbas or Mokbul Hossain. I want to be a Rajakar shit like Golam Azam, because Golam Azams never get prosecuted. I want to be the leader of a political party and call hartals whenever I like, because the people are still vote for me. I want to be the prime minister, because reputed universities are going to give me honorary Ph.D's even if I had failed the SSC exams. I the Joint Secretary of a Ministry, because even if I usurp millions and millions of Taka, people are going to respect me and call me honest. I want to be a "Pir", because people are going to worship me even if they know I am fake.

These are my ambitions, these are my dreams, and these are my hopes. I am confident that I can make my dreams come true someday.

MY HOPES / AMBITIONS / DREAMS