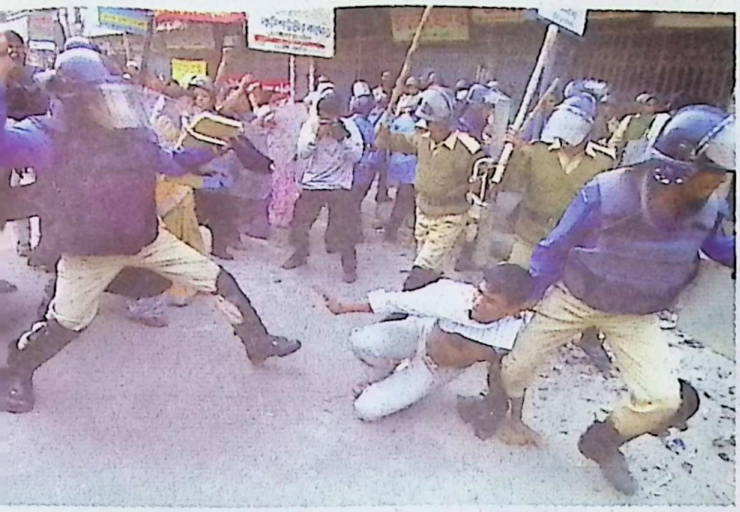
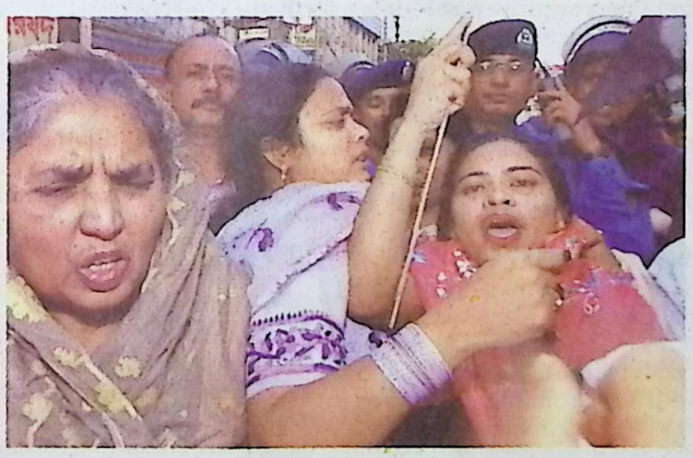




Violence has always been part of the political culture.

And along with the vindictive nature of street level political activities, there are numerous controversies surrounding these meetings and picketing and how they are organised. Research has shown that most of the faces that we see in the political meetings or in their other disruptive activities are basically recruits from the poor communities from all over the country who receive a small sum of money (usually around Tk.150-300) for their contribution in the organised chaos. Now here is the funny thing, if the majority of such participants are lured into political meetings and if there are thousands of people in that meeting, then doesn't that mean that majority of them are in desperate need on that tiny amount which vividly reflects the country's true economic realities?

As for hartals, well any citizen who is a patriot, can't support something like hartal and truly seek ways to carry out political activities in a manner that would add misery to the public life. Hartal has definitely lost all its credibility and economically speaking, the related political violence has lead to the loss of millions of dollars. According to one study by BGMEA, the nation loses US$18 million a day during hartal. Now multiply this amount with all the hartals that have taken place in the last 20 years (for example) and then add all the monetary losses in the other sectors due to violent political activities. The result is an immense financial burden for a poor nation like us.



There has to be a better way to do politics.

Interestingly, when the overseas branches of our political parties carry out any protests or processions, they do it in a very civilised manner where most of their chanting and slogans take place gently on some pavement and the party leaders and workers remain very respectful towards other people and their properties. How come they can't do the same here in Bangladesh? The way it is carried out here in Bangladesh, it seems that they are almost getting some kind of pleasure out of putting ordinary citizens into misery. What truly provokes such carnage and devastation of this level and what is it that leads to such absence of ethics and values? The bitter truth is that there is a growing frustration amongst the youth of the society, who are often in despair due to the lack of opportunities that could allow them to lead better lives. And over time this despair turns into aggression and the frustrations are replaced by blinding rage and sadly they wind up being misguided by a few crooked political leaders who simply capitalise on their frustration.

Article 37 of our Constitution states that every citizen has the right to assemble and participate in public events however in a peaceful manner where noone can carry any lethal weapons. The political parties perhaps need to relate to this Article of the National Constitution and incorporate it into their own constitutions. Since there are many different political parties with different ideologies, maybe it is impossible for them to resolve their differences and as citizens it might be too much to ask from our leaders. However, stress needs to be given more on coming up with thorough solutions to the political problems which can be done in a non-violent manner. Instead of turning our streets into battlefields, our leaders should prioritize on fruitful dialogue and maybe the latter will assist them in regaining the genuine admiration from the ordinary citizen once again. ■