

BITTER TRUTH

# Political instability will wreak havoc

**MD. ASADULLAH KHAN**

WITH 5 persons killed in police firing on the demonstrating BNP-led alliance marchers in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Rajshahi and almost 400 persons, including law enforcers, injured in clashes in different districts on Jan 29 and Jan 30, the political fever in the country has heated up again. It seems that ominous crises are going to plunge the country into chaos and uncertainty. Apprehension, despondency and despair hang over the country as the people ponder over the difficulties and hardship in the days to come because of the crippled state of business and transportation and the non-functioning industrial sector.

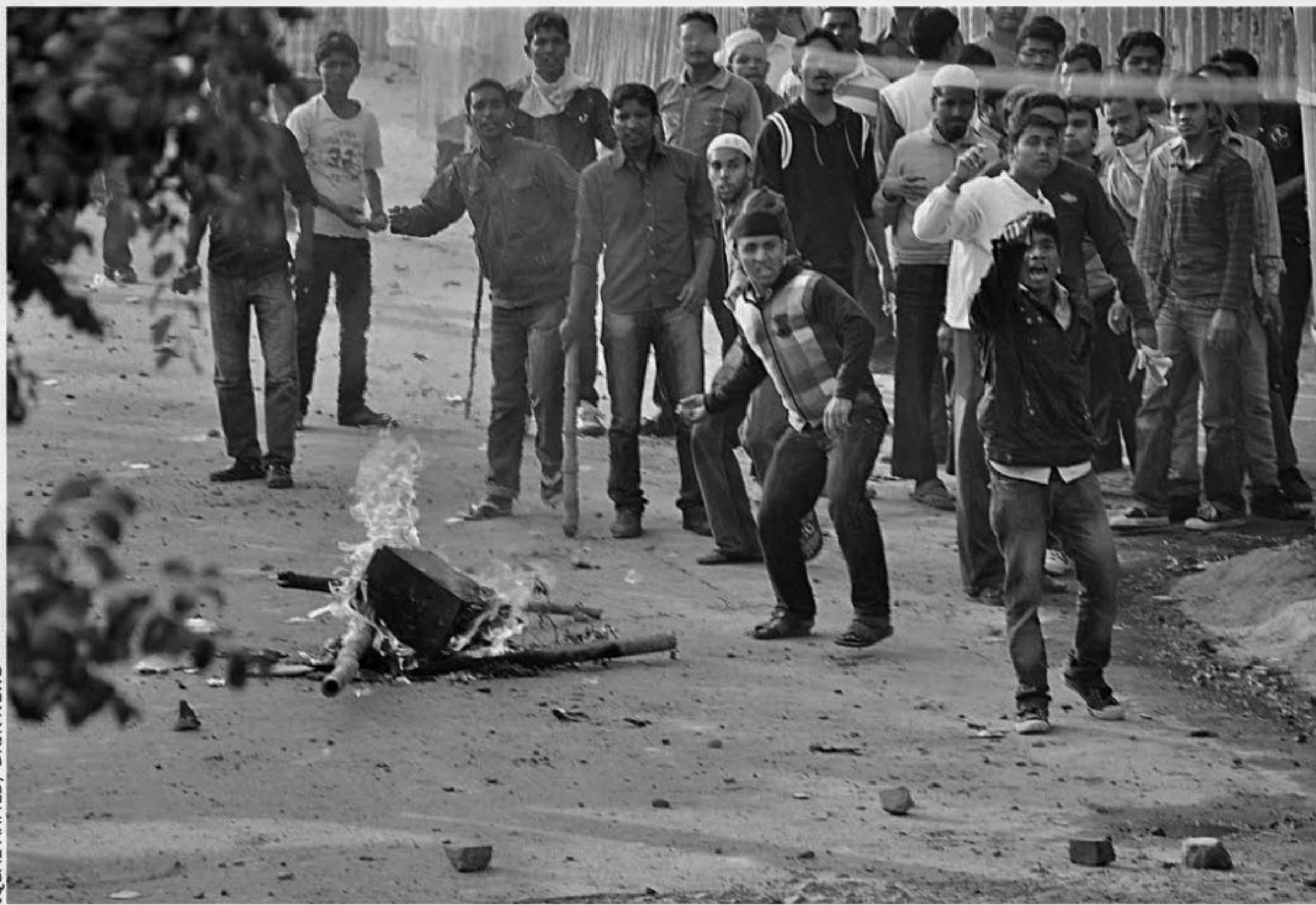
Contrary to peoples' expectation, the parliamentary election in 2008 has hardly healed the festering malaise and politics of aggrandisement. BNP and its allies are once again braced for another bruising power struggle. It is now evident that the polls result has further widened confidence gap between the government and the opposition.

The elation when Al-led alliance came to power has already given way to somberness. If the conflicting issues are not resolved quickly, democracy may be at risk in a country where politics often appears to be too tempting for many. The call by BNP and its allies, asking the ruling AL-*mohajote* to step down, will continue to draw disenchanted groups passing their days in extreme hardship and misery.

Before this protest degenerates into a vicious game of further damage of property and killing, good sense must prevail. The people's protest and resentment over fuel price hike and stock market scam has put another dent on the already battered reputation of the administration.

Because it is ignoring the people's feelings, this administration stands out as the country's most unyielding democratic regime. In a democratic environment, political leaders running the state must have the backbone to convey brutal facts like inflation, deficit etc. unflinchingly to the nation. They must not refuse to admit that policy reforms and most of the pledges made to the people are gathering dust because of governance failure. For instance, the previous communications minister should have diagnosed the ills plaguing the road sector. As the chief executive, he should have set the house in order by articulating some policy reforms before he embarked on grandiose plans. Policy reform must seek to eliminate the scope for rent collection and extortion by all agencies, including BCL cadres and implementing officials.

During the last three years, the people in the driving



TOBAL AHMED/ DRUK NEWS

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seat have squandered a unique opportunity of salvaging the politics and economy of the country. The people were ready, even eager, to hear some of the hard truths that intimate a yearning for change. But for such a change to take roots, leadership with boldness and persistence is needed. And the best way a populist government can do it is to treat people's mandate as a tool for governing rather than as an asset to be hoarded.

The two major parties have been feuding for more than two years. How much they have gained, people do not know. But the people know for certain that the country has lost a lot and will lose a lot more unless there is reconciliation. With all hopes and trust that the country has invested in the present ruling Al party, it can scarcely afford to prove unequal to the task.

Those in the administration must know better that the country is heading towards an inexorable decline. It may deal a further blow to the multi-party democracy, extinguishing the halo and glimmer of hope. The ruling party should not just consider it an opportunity but an

awesome obligation to make people believe that they are masters of their destiny and none has snatched their right to participate in national reconstruction programmes with zeal and fervour. We now need leaders armed more with will than anything else to stimulate the economy that is sinking before delivering such heady promises like poverty elimination, education for all and job creation.

With the national election still two years away, there is hardly any point for the BNP-led alliance to wage a war on the CTG issue now. BNP is implicitly making an effort to stall the war crimes trial to gain the support of the Jamaat e Islami. Sensible citizens can't comprehend how some BNP stalwarts who took part in the liberation war can now ask for stalling the war crimes trial on the pretext of transparency.

Both the ruling party and the opposition must realise that the country is passing through crises of ominous proportions. With prices of essentials rising almost every day and incomes remaining the same,

investment climate shrinking, import exceeding export, foreign remittance falling, forex reserve plummeting, bank borrowing increasing and taka value against dollar eroding sharply, not only the poor but also the middle and lower middle class people are in dire straits. The sudden power price hike and rise in the price of petroleum products has pushed them to the brink. Added to this is the continued fall in the share prices for the last 14 months, which has pushed not only 33 lakh small investors but also more than 10 million people dependent on them to the edge.

The force of events, mostly disastrous, taking shape at a break-neck speed has led the government to make up policy by the hour, day and week. Obtuse as each side has been in the lingering dispute, both sides are aware that the continuation of the conflict would be tantamount to total economic destruction.

With programmes of road marches, protest rallies, demonstrations and even *hartals* enforced once again, the people are holding their breath and may have to bear the brunt again. So they are always pleading for a "dialogue" to restart among the leaders, either in the parliament or outside, in the midst of an increasingly serious economic slowdown. Let not the innocent and vulnerable players become victims in a clash of the Titans. Unless the people can live in peace with two square meals a day, how will the politicians govern?

At the moment, the ruling party and the opposition are caught in a crisis of unusual dimension with the possibility of either revitalising them or hastening their doom. To regenerate the nation's confidence, the administration has to act most cautiously, and the actions must be backed by rational considerations, welfare of the masses, and a look to the future. With 60% of the population living below the poverty line and almost 20 million totally jobless, people are prompted to say what the chaos in the aftermath of the liberation war could not destroy, democracy did.

The stakes are too high to leave the contentious issues unresolved. No one in the country would be immune to the pain in the event of an all-out conflict. Worse, aggravated by self-aggrandisement and personal interest, and hardening extremist lines, party feuding could wreak havoc far beyond party interests. And with recession gripping the donor countries, generosity comes hard, especially when donors fear that the country's political and economic chaos would swallow limitless funds. With consequences so dire, the burden that the present ruling party must carry is too heavy for it. If it should falter again, the consequences will only reverberate.

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"FUEL economy and fuel efficiency" is a widely discussed topic in the world. Fuel economy is dependent on fuel efficiency and people's activities related to fuel consumption. Although these two terms are well known to the people in general, the technical term "fuel efficiency" may not be easily understood by every one. It is now important for every citizen to understand the term and to take individual responsibility to increase fuel efficiency for reducing fuel consumption that will in turn save our economy and prevent environmental pollution. It is true that if one is sincere about maintaining fuel efficiency of the machinery and equipment he uses in his day to day life, saving fuel cost is possible. In the context of fuel price hike, I would rather say hiking price will compel the people to know about increasing fuel efficiency that may help adjust their fuel cost within their ability, and at the same time contribute to national economy and environment.

Let us first try to have an understanding of fuel energy and efficiency. Fuel oil is a complex mixture of a wide range of hydrocarbon components having an internal chemical energy of 42 to 50 Mega joules per kg. Joule is the unit of work. Force is the result of multiplication of mass and gravitational acceleration. Gravitational acceleration is 9.81 meter /second<sup>2</sup>. 1 kg mass is equivalent to 1 x 9.81 Newton (N) or approximately 10 N force. Therefore, if someone is lifting 1 kg force, it can be said that he is lifting 10 N force. If 10 N force or 1 kg mass is lifted by 1 meter, it is said that a work of 10N-m or 10 Joule has been done. Having a clear conception of unit of work, power and energy can now be understood. Power is the work done in every second by any machine or equipment. Energy is the ability of doing work and is expressed as the quantity of work. One kg fuel of 42 Mega Joules calorific value, if burnt, would have an ability to lift 42 Mega Newton or 4.2 Mega Kg (1kg = 10 N) by 1 meter. 4.2 Mega kg means 4.2 million kg or 4200 ton mass. However, until today no engine manufacturer has been able to utilise the full energy released from burning fuel. Even half of the released

energy can not be utilised. The best makers' engines are able to utilise about 45 to 50%. The rest of the energy is wasted mostly in heating the environment. The more fuel we burn the more we heat up the environment, adding to the fear of melting polar ice and consequently rising seawater level. At the same time carbon dioxide and other pollutants are emitted proportionately with the amount of fuel burnt.

Manufacturers have tried their best all the way since invention of diesel engine to maximise the utilisation and reduce the waste. Present days' specific fuel consumption is claimed to be as low as 160 gm/Kw-h by some manufacturers. That means if an engine of 1 Kw (1000 joule/ sec) rating runs for an hour (3,600sec), it will consume 160 gm fuel oil. 1 Kw-

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hour or 3.6 MJ energy is obtained in expense of 160 gm fuel. 160 gm fuel contains 6.72 MJ energy (0.16 X 42 MJ = 6.72 MJ). Therefore overall efficiency= (3.6/6.72) X 100 = 53.6%. Efficiency of a machine or equipment is again reduced due to the lack of maintenance and in many cases due to the ignorance of end users.

So, half of the released energy from fuel just heats the environment and a small portion is dispersed as friction and sound. It is worth mentioning that 1 kg fuel mixes with about 25 kg air during the burning process and subsequently 26 kg burning products are being dispersed into the atmosphere. The atmosphere on top of our spherical planet of about 12750 Km diameter consists of layers of air of about 100 Km thickness. Three quarter of the atmospheric mass is

within 11 km from the surface. It means we are continuously pouring pollutants into a limited atmospheric volume. Is that not disastrous?

It will be wise to demonstrate the realisation of fuel economy and fuel efficiency by some examples. Someone uses a washing machine to clean and dry his clothes. But if he thinks about fuel economy he will wash the clothes by hand and dry them in the sun. His use of manual and solar power to alleviate the fuel crisis may seem too small. But it is sure that if every citizen thinks like him and does the same thing, it may make a great contribution to the nation's fuel economy.

In my building there is an electrical lift. I stay on 3rd floor and always try to avoid the lift, saving the much-needed electricity. In return, I get health care free of cost -- physical exercise that helps me to remain fit. At the same time I contribute to fuel economy.

Good housekeeping helps fuel economy. Vacuum cleaning of the condenser coils at the back of air conditioning units and fridges contributes to fuel economy. Accumulated dust reduces their efficiency by up to 25%, adding that cost to the electricity bill. Defrosting frozen food inside a fridge makes the fridge compressor run less. Maintaining the car engine -- cleaning air filter, keeping tires at the correct pressure -- and avoiding traffic rush hours will help run a car with higher efficiency, thereby contributing to fuel economy.

Fuel economy depends on how effectively a consumer manages his energy. It is possible to substantially reduce fuel consumption straight away and without major investment. Areas that need to be paid attention to immediately are machines running with a non-optimal load, non-optimised energy consumption in the working environment (lighting, ventilation, operation during breaks, night operation), and reduced level of engine efficiency due to aging machines. Every individual and institution has to assess and analyse the energy systems to identify the areas of savings and to act accordingly to save fuel, with corresponding savings on cost and CO2 emissions.

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## Defence of the drone

NEWS DESK: *The Statesman*

IT was only very obvious long before Barack Obama advanced his confirmation on Tuesday of the CIA's use of drones against militants in Pakistan. As he gears up for elections, the US president has admitted for the first time that the offensive was in the nature of "precision strikes" against anti-American forces, notably the "al-Qaeda and its affiliates." He has stopped short of delving into the canons of international law, let alone Pakistan's seemingly valid grouse over this "violation of sovereignty."

Theoretically, therefore, the US president is on slippery ground. An estimate by the New America Foundation, a US think-tank, calculates between 1,715 and 2,680 casualties in the past eight years through this unmanned remote-controlled operation.

For all the "precision and surgical strikes," it is an operation that has killed civilians as well and despite the president's supplementary that "we're very careful in terms of how it's been applied." Mr. Obama has been forthright enough in his response to the question whether the drone attacks had soured the USA's relations with Pakistan, once partners together in the fight against terrorism. "Islamabad lacks either the political will or the capacity to take on extremists. Our relations have gotten more strained because there are a lot of extremists inside that country."

In real terms, therefore, he has obliquely admitted that the equation has been teetering over the past few years.

President Obama has taken the lid off a covert programme. In the process, he has unravelled one of the most carefully-guarded secrets of the US government. The fine print is a defence of the drone offensive that has killed the militants, including a few leading lights, without achieving the larger objective. And the scenario continues to be ever so forbidding; for every militant killed in a drone attack, two are born. The president is acutely aware that the killing of Osama bin Laden -- a case of face-to-face precision -- hasn't quite signalled the epilogue of terrorism.

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