

"Politicians use [hartal] as a weapon. And I don't think it's a good weapon."

Mohammad Hanif, driver

about our country right now," shares Rahman, a professional. "Last week I saw a report on TV showing two newspapers, one from 1971 and one from 2013. They were both carrying similar headlines and pictures so what the hell is happening here? This shouldn't be happening. Whatever may be, the politicians should sit and talk. But they're just worried about their own power and own benefits, I don't see any intentions of talking."

Rahman says she would have cast a 'No Vote' in the upcoming election if it hadn't been banned in the current government's tenure, "That was a



Jamaat activists set fire to a Dhaka-Rajshahi train – a huge step from the 'usual' level of violence. PHOTO: STAR FILE

Chowdhury believes the buck lies with the politicians, "I think if the political leaders think of the country, this situation will improve. They think of themselves and their politics and not of the people." He adds, "We have to select leaders who will work for the country, like Mahathir Mohamad for Malaysia, he has developed a lot and shifted Malaysia's situation to become, I would say, a developed country."

While the need for dialogue between the government and the opposition parties was voiced by every citizen, the expectation that it would happen is practically nonexistent. "I'm really worried really good way to protest and say 'we do not feel there is any real representative among the options. Who is coming up is not who we want to lead us.'" Ultimately this is the crux of the problem currently facing normal citizens of Bangladesh; their hopes and expectations of politicians are not being heard, leaving them to feel like collateral damage in the current situation of political uncertainty. The threat of civil war and question of the army policing streets worries everyone and if the political parties calling for hartals would just ask them what *they* want, rickshaw pullers to business women would all say 'Enough'. ■