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RIDER CLAUSE OF LIFE

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What went through every citizen's mind on Sunday was a living hell unfolding before one's own eyes. We have seen nothing like this before, let alone experienced it at first hand. Even by the standards of our convulsive history, the mayhem, an irreligion incarnate, was the biggest ever jolt to the sensibilities of a people given to piety.

The sheer magnitude of Hefajat-e Islam's Dhaka siege demonstrations was itself challenging, not to mention the fact that the surge was hijacked through subversion by the Jamaat-Shibir elements. The ensuing violence, vandalism, loot, arson and killing have extracted a social and human cost we would take a long time to live down.

It was a close call, a near shave with a situation going completely out of control and the dire consequences it held for public order. Thankfully, the government has asserted its authority over the forces of destruction and terrorisation at the centre of the capital city. For the nub of new-found power capitalising on religious sentiments of the people has been exposed with its devious diabolic face to the general public. The nearly 24-hour-long trauma saw the city-dwellers reeling in a fright of unknown. The dread of the gray area between law and lawlessness is remindful of the wafer-thin fabric that separates normality from anarchy which is susceptible to rupture under the dead weight of sheer numbers.

Articulation of demands and grievances is a democratic right but should one abuse it, one is likely to lose it.

The Sunday's inferno spells out specific messages for all stakeholders: The government, the ruling party, the principal opposition BNP and the religion-based parties. The government has supposedly wizened to realise that when dealing with huge numbers of demonstrators they have to insist on rules of engagement and have the seekers of permission for rally and sit-in, see the wisdom of complying with them in the best interest of societal order. If the society breaks none is safe including the proponents of agitation, far less the agitators and the victims of their excesses. As the opposition BNP, it can't be indulgent of lawlessness by directing its party followers to stand by the unruly breakaway groups from the mainstream Hefajat. For the religion-based parties including madrasa-centered Hefajatees, they must avoid inciting their own people to violence.

Now about the people's bravery and resilience in the face of newer threats to their life and living. The interesting thing to note is that the demands of life are so compelling that they take risks they would not have normally taken in a right frame of mind. The bizarre heights politics has reached are a negative headwind, we must come unstuck with. The craze in politics has infected people with a craziness of their own. Surreal things spawn eerie solutions; people brave a ride over motorcycle, board buses, hazard driving private cars, knowing they were traveling through notoriously troubling areas of the city. Incidentally, every place is a potential battle zone and that itself impels a swift end to the politics of mindless confrontation.

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