





STOP THIS POLITICS

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SPECIAL

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Three-and-a-half-year-old Gias and his father Mannan at the burn unit of DMCH. Mannan was badly burnt at Jatrabari in the capital during the 84-hour hartal on November 12 when pickets torched the bus he was in.

POLITICS OF KILLING PEOPLE

Public furious like Vesuvius

WASIM BIN HABIB

FROM a distance, it looked like a usual chitchat a group of four youths were having in front of a roadside tea stall at Khamarbari intersection in the capital. A closer observation, however, revealed something different -- they were expressing their anger and anguish the ongoing political violence was doling out to people's lives.

"If bombing or burning people to death are the political strategies to realise demands, then we hate this politics," fumed one of the youths when this correspondent approached them for their views on the current political situation.

"The life and livelihood of people is held hostage by such brutal political moves. No person with conscience and humanity can tolerate such violent attacks where we see images of burn victims writhing in pain," said Minhaz, an MBA student of a private university.

Taking the floor, Atiqur Rahman, who works in a private bank, questioned whether acts like dismantling rail tracks and torching buses by hurling petrol bombs can be termed a political movement at all.

"What kind of politics is this and what for? Why are they [the politicians] playing with our lives? ... I don't know how many more deaths it will need to make our politicians reach a consensus," he said in utter disappointment.

The escalating political violence has brewed anger and frustration among the general public who seek an end to the "game of deaths in the name of politics".

Talking to The Daily Star, a cross-section of people vented their resentment at the persisting political violence and viewed that both the major political parties would have to take responsibility for the loss of lives in such violence.

Hamid Ali, a small trader at Karwan Bazar, said,

"I start for my shop every day in the fear that anything bad might happen to me. I mostly avoid getting on a bus now."

He also said the political instability was wreaking havoc on his business as his sales had dropped significantly.

"We don't want such politics," he added.

However, for grocer Mahmud, it was meaningless to talk about the political situation.

"What is the use of making any comment [on politics]? Do they [the politicians] really bother what we think or how we are living our lives," said Mahmud at his grocery shop at Hatirpool Bazar.

Hashmat Ali, a driver of a CNG-run three wheeler, said he had to risk his life and come out to work in order to provide for his family.

"The fear of arson attacks haunts us all the time. What worries me is that my family will be ruined if something happens to me. But I have no choice here," he said.

Private service holder Khandaker Nasim said overthrowing a government through such deadly acts cannot be a democratic way.

"Whims of the top political leaders have pushed the country to the verge of ruin and, as usual, the general people are paying the price," he fretted.

Javed, a Dhaka University student, said there could be a peaceful way of the anti-government movement in Bangladesh like what is going on in Bangkok.

"The main opposition cannot avoid the responsibility of the deaths during their programmes. Similarly, the ruling party has to find a solution so that the opposition does not resort to such programmes," he observed.

Most of the people this correspondent talked to have echoed what rickshaw-puller Abul Mia said-- "We want peace, nothing else."



PHOTO: FILE

Murad picked up a bomb at Panthapath thinking it was a tennis ball.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Belal at CMCH after a bomb exploded near him at Pahartoli, Chittagong.



PHOTO: FILE

Sumi had her hands, legs and face burnt after her bus was burnt in Gazipur.

When lungs turn to charcoal

ZYMA ISLAM & SHAHEEN MOLLAH

For the 16 arson victims, who died in the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, it was almost like breathing fire until they finally gave up, say doctors.

"During the attacks, they had to inhale a lot of heat that burnt its way through the breathing tracts, damaging the lungs," said Shah Alam, in-charge of DMCH burn unit's Intensive Care Unit.

Medical sources stated that almost all the burn victims of the recent hartals and blockades had sustained inhalation injuries, as they had remained trapped in burning vehicles for a considerable amount of time.

"Petrol bomb explosions produce a large volume of carbon monoxide gas leading to damaged lung tissues and inhalation injuries," said

Sanowar Hossain, chief of Bomb Disposal Unit Additional Deputy Commissioner.

For those who died of injuries from petrol bombs, every gasp of fresh air was unbearable pain shooting down the throat.

According to physician Alam, the victims' lungs had swollen and got infected. Water also had got to their lungs.

Monir, the 14 year old boy who sustained 95 percent burns from an arson attack on his father's covered van, had suffered intensely from respiratory problems for more than three days until he breathed his last early on November 7.

His father Ramjan Ali described his dying moments. "He woke up and all of a sudden started twisting and thrashing. He cried and sat up, trying to pull the tubes out and jump

out of bed."

Ramjan held the boy, who then died in his arms.

According to DMCH records, the teenager died from inhalation injuries.

Similarly, Nahid Morol, victim of the November 28 bus arson in Shahbagh, died from 52 percent burns. Doctors at the ICU told The Daily Star of the horrifying tale of how he had suffocated to death.

"The muscles of his throat had swollen, slowly choking his breathing tract. He suffered from massive inhalation injuries," said Hussein Imam, a doctor at the burn unit ICU.

He had held on to his brother, Russell, and cried out to him, "Please save me, brother!" before going under forever.

Nahid's cousin Robin, who was

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PHOTO: FILE

Lal Mia being taken to CMCH after he picked up a crude bomb thinking it to be a ball.

Real culprits stay safe

SHARIFUL ISLAM & M RAHMAN

Intermediate first year student Rajib (not his real name) was walking down an almost empty city street on his way home from a coaching centre on a hartal day three weeks ago. Suddenly, he saw a miscreant exploding a crude bomb only a few yards away. Instead of panicking, his teen-age curiosity made him take his camera phone out and take a snap of the blast.

However, little could he guess that his innocent curiosity would soon prove detrimental to him.

Within minutes, a police

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