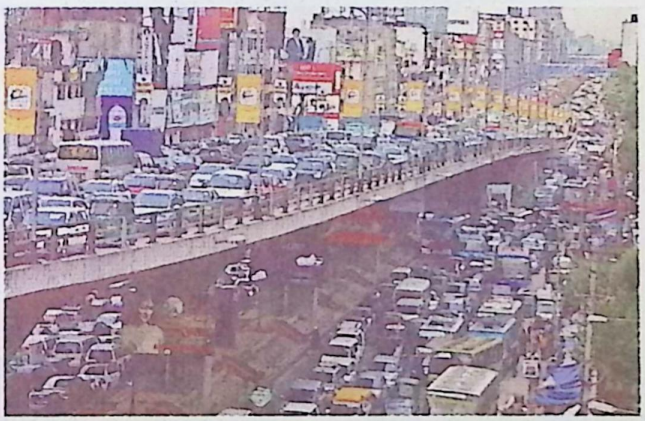
# Pray the Normality Lasts!

**SHAH HUSAIN IMAM**

This is a dam-bursting stream of life we are floating in. Dhaka siege formally over with the BNP-led alliance calling a halt to *oborodh* and hartal, a surge of go getting is back in Dhaka, back with a vengeance. Apart from the routine chores, the additional load of postponed agendas and priorities are drawing on the reserve bits of adrenaline. Like everywhere we have gluts to clear from the backyards of life.

When normalcy dipped into newer depths of abnormality, we cried out -- 'this far and no further'. It was as though a known stage of decline was better than an unknown one implying a certain fear of being thrown into a gray area of uncertainty *ad infinitum*. People, therefore, tend to crave for the status quo to last although it may still be simmering inside. So what if it is a facade of normalcy, it is welcome.



Remember the story of a person bemoaning his bare footed condition as people walked by him in their shoes. Moments later he sees a one-legged man and at once feels consoled with compassion for the unfortunate soul.

Literally, a pretty hackneyed story when you think of prosthetic limbs otherwise disabled people are running on these days to break athletic records. Science came to their relief but when human follies drive away normalcy from life it forebodes a collective disaster we have had a close shave with in recent months.

On a perilous perch when entrenched political turmoil chipped away at whatever little quality of life we have had, we were too involved in our own situation to be looking out for any relief. In every house, work place, shop, restaurant, the single question making the rounds was: What will tomorrow hold for us? We were literally living by the day, both physically and emotionally.

There is six months of peaceful respite declared by BNP alliance urging the government for a dialogue to initiate the process of a fresh election seeking popular mandate which was missing on January 5 election. But with the politicians' nerves gone taut, there is no telling when the precarious political balance will be breached. The threat still looms, even though political weapon of oborodh and hartal stands blunted through overuse.

The Syrian narrative of a two-year long bloodbath, internal displacement of people as well as refugee exodus to the adjoining countries is an epic tale of human endurance and resilience. The Assad regime has shut off such a big swathe of the country that not even a loaf of bread can get in. As a result, the children are eating grass to survive. We are nowhere near that situation nor our objective conditions comparable to Syria's yet, we must err on the side of caution lest we fall through the slippery slope of any exclusionary policy.

Analysts and observers enthusiastically go about reeling off facts and data on the loss of man hours and the stupendous costs to the economy including opportunity costs of sustained spells of blockades and hartals. Seldom do they measure the psychological and cultural impacts of shutdowns and blockades on the people's mind.

We do highlight the fact that the worst sufferers are the vulnerable groups of people like women and children, particularly of the minority communities. The trauma they go through including that suffered by burn victims may be incalculable but surely quantifiable through head counts. What is going through their minds as well as families having to endure unforeseen bereavement of the only earning members of many a household can only be imagined and consolation expressed for. Although their trauma is inconsolable, at least an expression of apology for their plight from those whose actions unwittingly or wittingly contributed to their plight would have been in order. This conscionable act should have been the first step towards recompensing their loss paving the way for a no-nonsense rehabilitation of the victims in the end.

*The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.*