



**Loss and  
DAMAGE**  
In blockade  
days

**51**

Dead  
In arson  
attacks: 28



**1,020**

Injured  
Burn injuries:  
158



**30**

Days of waste

**410**

Vehicles  
torched

Vehicle vandalised: 725  
Loss: Tk 100 crore



**7**

Sabotage  
on trains  
Loss: Tk 17  
crore



**10**

Sabotage on  
launches  
Loss: Tk 2  
crore



LIFE IN DANGER

EDUCATION SHATTERED

BUSINESS GRINDING

COMMUNICATIONS CRUMBLE

## Country HAMSTRUNG

*BNP-led alliance hands people longest suffering through non-stop blockade*

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Nobody seems to be safe these days.

People are burnt alive as mindless arson attacks on public transports go unabated.

The economy continues to bleed and academic life of students is severely affected due to the ongoing political turmoil.

Yet, the battling sides -- the Awami League and the BNP -- appear nonchalant and rigid on their stances. And there is no sign of any effective move from either side to bring an end to this situation.

It is because of their rigidity that the country has been experiencing the longest ever nonstop political agitation -- blockade -- in its history.

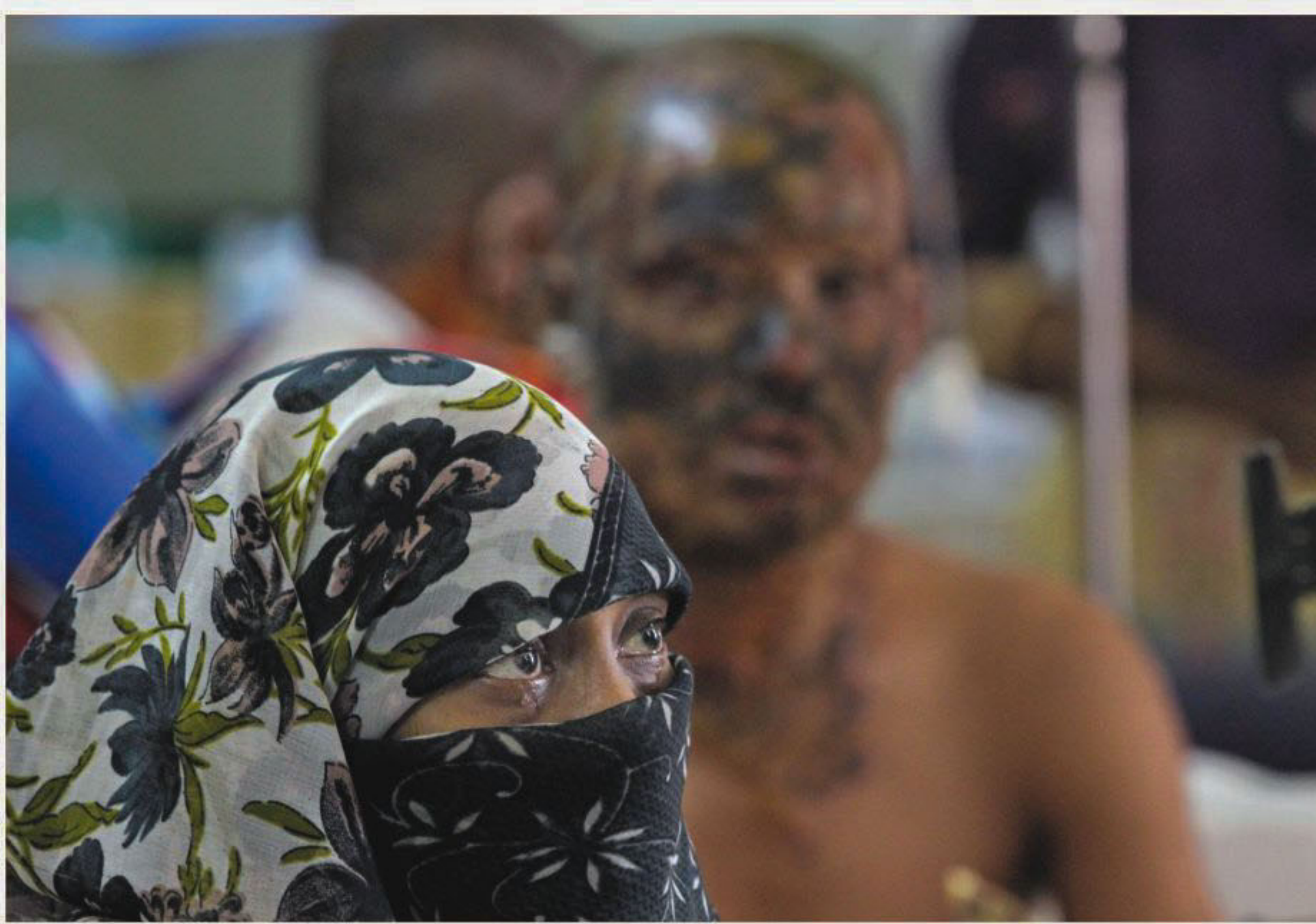
The previous major agitations took place in 1990 against the autocratic Ershad regime, in 1995-96 and in 2006 against the then BNP-led governments, and in 2013 against the AL-led government.

But none of those was as lengthy as the current one, and people were not so ruthlessly killed then.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance that enforced the non-stop blockade on January 6 set a record yesterday by continuing the programme for 30 consecutive days.

The record may get bigger, as BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia already vowed to continue the blockade until the government creates a congenial atmosphere for an early parliamentary election.

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Tears roll down from the eyes of Salma at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday as her brother Khokon, in the background, looks on. Khokon had his entire face burnt in the arson attack on a bus in Jatrabari on January 23.

PHOTO:  
AMRAN HOSSAIN

### TIMELINE

**JANUARY 6**

Khaleda calls countrywide non-stop blockade  
Police arrest BNP acting secretary general Fakhrul  
Police sued 17,000 over January 5 countrywide violence.

**JANUARY 7**

High Court asks government to stop publicising Tarique statements

**JANUARY 8**

Rows between AL and BNP over BJP chief Amit Shah's phone to Khaleda

**JANUARY 9**

Blockade continued in spite of Bishwa Itjema

**JANUARY 11**

Khaleda's adviser Shamsuzzaman Dudu arrested

**JANUARY 12**

Hasina terms Khaleda queen of terrorism and militancy

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## Is this what politics does to people?

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA  
ADHIKARY

"It's burning. O Allah! It's burning."

Groaning in pain, Salauddin Palash, 36, blurted those words repeatedly, with his bandaged hands lifted upward at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Tuesday.

Standing close, his wife Nasrin Akter was waving a hand-fan about in her naive effort to ease the excruciating pain her husband had been in since he was burnt along with 27 other bus

*"We don't know politics.  
Nor do we understand  
it. Please let us live."*

MOTHER OF AN ARSON VICTIM

passengers in the Jatrabari arson attack on January 23.

With his face burnt and left leg broken, Palash, a resident of Barpa of Kanchpur, was shifting restlessly in his bed. Seeing a female doctor pass by him, he blurted again: "It's burning,

apa." The doctor stopped and raised her hand with a gesture of assurance that everything would be fine, and then walked away.

Nasrin continued fanning, staring blankly at her husband on the first floor of the burn unit. "Please pray for my husband. We have two minor children," she said weakly while her husband continued groaning.

Such cries, whimpers and agonised howls of the victims and their families were all around the burn unit. A thick

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### PETROL BOMB ON BUS Five suffer burn injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the countrymen still reeling from the shock of Tuesday's grisly arson attack in Comilla, another heinous attack of arson on a passenger bus left five people burnt in Gazipur last night.

The victims are Rakib, 12; Mohammad Sabuj, 20; Kamrul Hasan, 28, and driver Jahangir Hossain, 42. Identity of another victim could not be known as of filing this report at

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## Another victim of Comilla arson dies

*Crude bomb thrown inside BGB battalion HQ compound; 2 JCD leaders held with bombs*

STAR REPORT

Rashedul Islam has gone beyond sufferings.

He had been burnt in Tuesday's gruesome firebomb attack on a bus in Comilla. With his respiratory tract damaged and blisters all over his body, the 25-year-old had been lying at the Intensive Care Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital since Tuesday, making bloodcurdling groaning sounds of excruciating pain.

And after enduring all those sufferings for around 38 hours, Rashedul died yesterday afternoon.

With him, eight people have so far died in the deadliest arson attack since the ongoing violence began on January 5.

Rashedul was among the four ill-fated people from Chakoria of Cox's Bazar who were all set to go to Qatar in search of a better future. Two others -- Mohammad

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### ARSON, VIOLENCE Govt plans combing operation

PARTHA PRATIM  
BHATTACHARJEE

The government is likely to launch a combing operation across the country in a day or two to nab arsonists and makers of petrol bombs.

The move comes in the wake of rising number of bomb attacks on passenger buses and goods-laden vehicles. At least 28 people have died in arson attacks since on January 5.

An intelligence agency has made a list of 779 people who allegedly make and throw crude bombs. The agency submitted the list to the home ministry.

"We've received a report

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Tomato farmers got a great harvest this year but are being let down by poor prices. Wholesalers are reluctant to buy the perishable vegetables fearing they would not be able to ship during the ongoing blockade. The photo was taken at Chowkibari of Dhunat in Bogra.

PHOTO:  
BANGLAR CHOKH

## Businesses continue to bleed, profusely

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The economy is paying a heavy price, thanks to the blockade that continues to disrupt supply chains, corner businesses and threaten government's revenue mobilisation.

The country has lost at least \$10 billion directly in physical damages and lost productions, incomes and profits since the BNP-led alliance launched its nonstop blockade on January 6, according to estimates from various chambers and associa-

tions.

The blockade and violence have badly hit farm incomes, disrupted inter-district road and rail transport, pushed up food inflation, weakened buyer confidence on the exporters' ability to deliver in time and halted the rebuilding of investors and consumers' confidence.

Every day, the economy is losing about Tk 2,277.86 crore due to the blockade and the strike alone. The amount would stand at Tk 2,500 crore if the daily loss is calculated taking

into account the 25 percent of the total industrial production loss, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) estimates.

Garment sector, whose contribution accounts for 81 percent of the country's total exports and 15 percent of the GDP, have lost Tk 25,275 crore in the last one month.

During the same period, transport sector counted a loss of Tk 9,000 crore, agriculture 8,643 crore, real estate 7,500 crore and tourism Tk 6,300 crore.

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## Obama, Modi talked about Bangladesh

*Says White House official*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the ongoing political situation in Bangladesh during the former's visit to India between January 25 and 27.

Other issues like democratic forces and empowerment of citizens in Bangladesh were also discussed, the White House has officially confirmed.

Replying to a question at a press conference in Washington DC on Tuesday afternoon, Phil Reiner, senior director, South Asia Affairs of the National Security Council, said the two leaders in New Delhi had talked about the situation prevailing in Bangladesh.

"Obviously, the situation in Bangladesh is a tense one, but I think the two leaders during this visit were able to

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## No need for state of emergency: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday ruled out any possibility of promulgating a state of emergency despite the ongoing violence that claimed over 50 lives.

Replying to a lawmaker's question at parliament, she said, "Why is emergency needed? None has been able to create such a situation. If anyone wants to do it [create a situation that requires the imposition of emergency] then people will resist it and there is no doubt about it."

"We won't allow the country to endure



anything unconstitutional..."

Rumors had been running wild that a state of emergency would come into effect soon to end the violence and bomb attacks.

Hasina said the intention of BNP chief Khaleda Zia on January 5 was to create an anarchic situation. "Her intention was to hold a rally on January 5, and sit there until the government toppled, just like Hefajat had tried to do in 2013."

She said intelligence agencies had issued reports hinting that and that was why

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"We [policemen] have the ability to kill two people for your [arsonists] every single killing."

SHAFIQUEL ISLAM, DIG  
CHITTAGONG RANGE