

Oborodh+Hartal 2015

The semester never ends

ISHRAT JAHAN

As the country's political debacle becomes more rigid with no clear end in sight, a month has gone to waste for universities all around Bangladesh.

University life is hard enough without having to learn how to make your way through the political violence and come out at the end of the semester with both your grades and your life intact. However, it's not just the grades that university-goers lose out on when stuck in the middle of a national crisis. The university experience is often more diverse, involving internships, club affairs that promote one's personal growth. But at this moment the importance of a well-rounded university experience has faded in the face of far bigger issues, such as: how to dodge petrol bombs and how likely are you to die in cocktail blasts.

We talked to a few disgruntled students. Here's what they had to say

"I study CSE at MIST. It is said that even if the world is ending, MIST will remain open. Our classes are going on regularly. People who live far have simply shifted to the hostel temporarily. Attendance is no different than on a regular day. But going home from the hostel is always risky. People, who cannot attend classes, lose out on grades and important coursework."

– **Mustabeen Quazi, Military Institute of Science and Technology**

"My classes had 'officially' begun on January 18 but we have actually been able to go to university for only

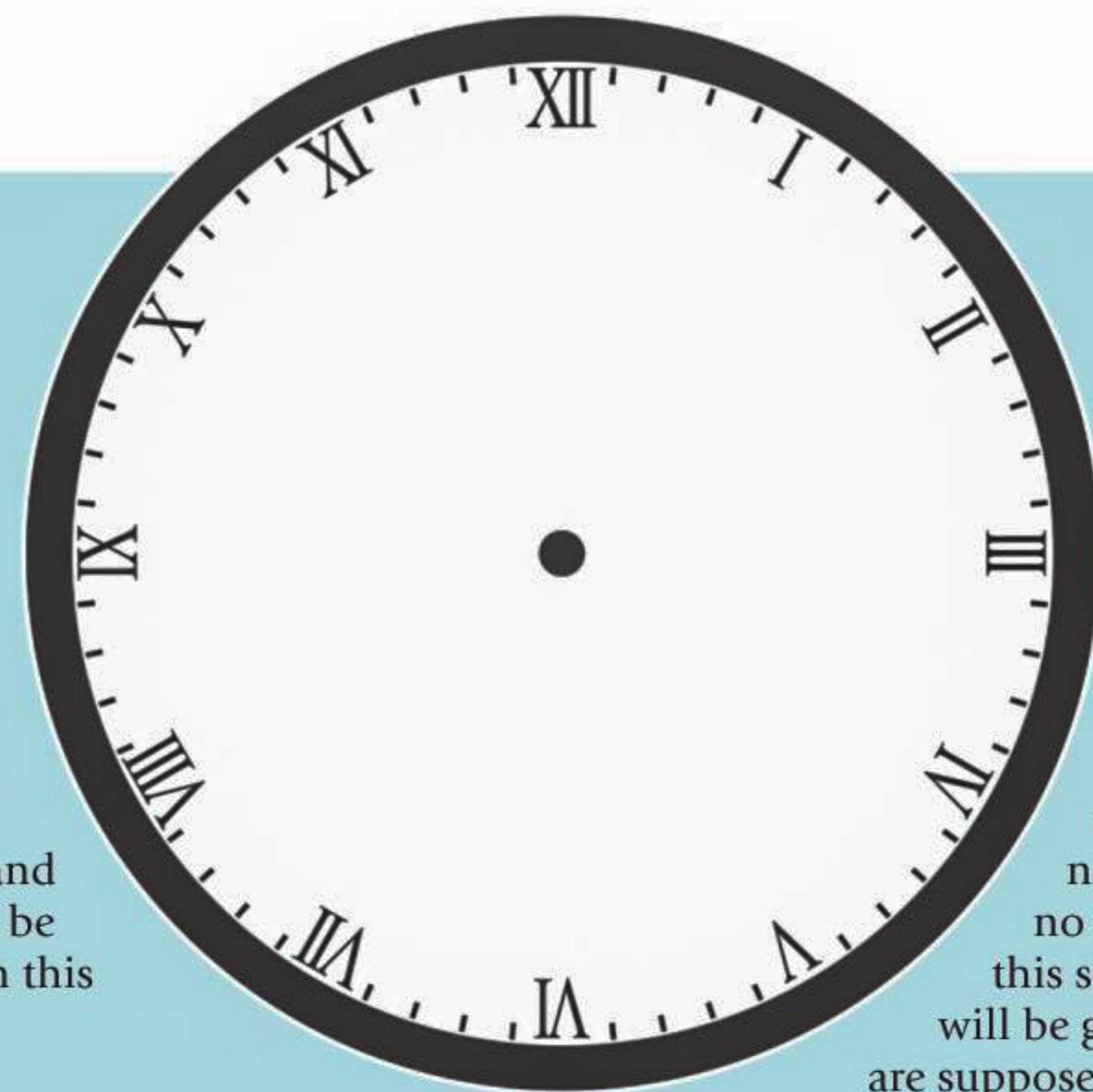
3 days. We're just sitting at home all 7 days of the week. I absolutely love this – for now. The consequences will not be as fun. If we miss more classes, our holidays will get cancelled, and the teachers will cram the syllabus, which will be particularly difficult, but I guess I'm stuck with this situation."

– **Anila Kishwar, IBA-DU**

"I'm studying LLB (Hons) under University of London External Programmes. Our finals are supposed to take place in May. Because of blockade/strike, everyone's very doubtful whether we will be able to finish the syllabus on time. Since these exams are centrally regulated and Bangladeshi students are the ones unnecessarily lagging in their studies, there's every possibility that we will score less than students from other countries. Also if the finals get cancelled we can't sit for exams this year at all. The teachers are trying their absolute best to take make-up classes; they are even taking online classes consecutively with the regular ones for those who can't show up. The entire situation is as bad as it can get. I did one online class; it was fine except for the buffering and sound problems."

– **Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee, LLB (Hon), University of London External Programmes**

"The semester started on January 19, and so far I have only gone to university once. We have make-up classes scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays as usual. However, now each class is 2 hours long, instead of 1



hour and 20 minutes. Right now, I have no clue how this semester will be going. We are supposed to finish the semester on April 27; I

think it might be extended to June now, which is really unfair. This political unrest is crippling the nation, and to be honest, as a student, I am feeling a bit lost right now."

– **Shababa Iqbal, North South University**

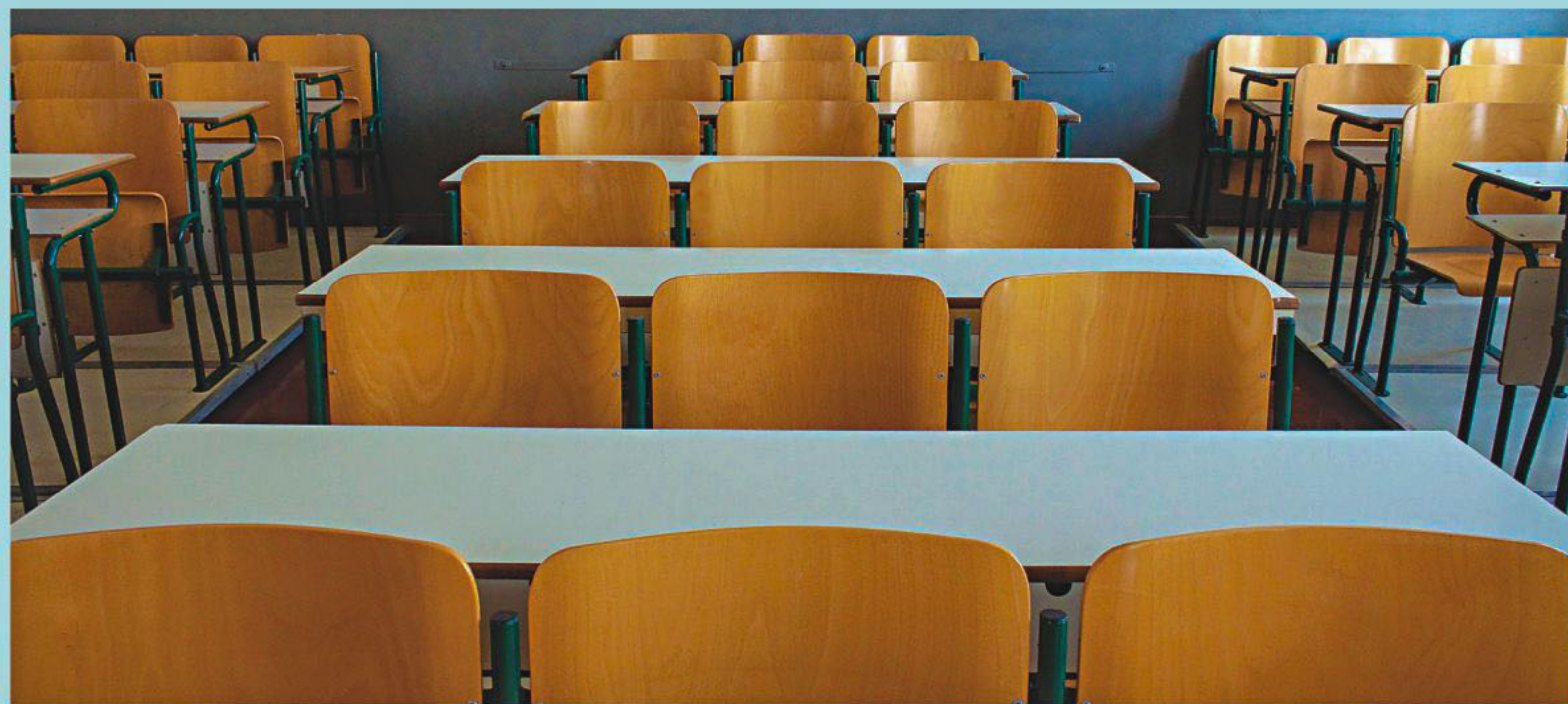
"We are in the middle of a two-and-a-half week project, and design projects require intense workmanship – both in and out of studios. But thanks to *oborodh-hartal*, we've already lost one-and-a-half weeks. None of the students have any idea what they are supposed to do and consecutive make-up classes don't solve the problem because you need at least a break of a day to work on the changes. The end result: most of us lose our flow of work and we keep on putting it off until classes resume but doing that doesn't leave us with much time for finishing and handing in a complete project. Both the students and the professors know that most of the work we will be handing in will be barely satisfactory. In addition to that, our design options have become limited; they (the professors) give us projects with sites close to our university because site visits by buses or cars are not a feasible option any more."

– **Doito Bonotulshi, Department of Architecture, BRAC University**

"I'm currently doing a residential semester at BRAC University's Savar campus. Academically, we're not doing so badly. Many of the teachers are coming in the night before (taking on a huge risk) and staying long stretches here. In fact, as a result, they're taking advance classes. From that aspect, the political situation is actually benefiting us – we will be finishing earlier. However, all our study and social learning tours are getting cancelled. Much of the residential semester experience is based on experiential learning and we're being deprived of that because it's unsafe to leave the campus."

– **Selima Sara Kabir, BRAC University, TARC campus**

The article was written on February 5, 2015. The number of days universities remain open are subject to change.



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