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BNP, allies call country-wide hartal today

By Staff Correspondent
A countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the BNP-led opposition alliance is scheduled to begin at 6 am today. The alliance components--BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ)--had called the hartal simultaneously at separate rallies in the city on April 8 to protest water-power crises, deterioration of law and order, anarchy, terrorism, price hike of essentials and government's alleged failure to run the country. The opposition parties brought out torch processions in the city yesterday to drum up support for today's hartal. Addressing a rally at Rampura prior to bringing out a torch procession, BNP Secretary General Abdul Manna Bhuiyan urged the Awami League government to resolve water-power crises, stop terrorism and improve law and order. Otherwise, quit power immediately announcing a mid-term polls, he said. The Awami League government will be toppled through a

Vajpayee govt collapses



Vajpayee: Out



Sonia: In

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: India's BJP-led government was today voted out of office after it lost the confidence motion by one vote in the Lok Sabha setting the stage for installation of a Congress-led alternative. The motion, moved by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Thursday, was defeated in the House by 270-269 after five members belonging to Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) did a volte face changing its last night's stand to abstain and voted with other opposition parties. Saifuddin Soz, a lawmaker of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's National Conference Party, went against his party's decision to support Vajpayee government. Vajpayee, after a hasty Cabinet meeting, met the President and submitted his resignation. The Biblical thirteen proved

President blasts govt, opposition People can't be bluffed all the time

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday rebuked the major political parties for their intransigent attitude and said some concessions are needed to have an understanding on political issues, reports UNB. "Not confrontation, compromise is essential. Everybody needs to give some concessions and shift from one's respective stance for an understanding," he said. "But in our country no politician or party will ever confess their faults so long alive, never budge an inch. There will be no recognition even if the other party did a good job." The President's apparently harsh but pragmatic remarks came when he spoke at a discussion at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the morning. The Cultural Affairs Ministry organised the discussion marking the Mujibnagar Day. President Shahabuddin

said: "It must be remembered that people is the source of all power, and it can't be possible to sail through election all the time by misleading, deceiving or bluffing them." He deplored that although 28 years have passed since the country's independence, efforts to fulfil the people's basic rights are yet to succeed. "It is the most urgent task of all to make a united effort dis-regarding party to resolve national problems. It requires a consensus by all political parties on major national issues," the President said. "But in lieu of unity, we now see extreme disunity, serious conflict and confrontational politics," he said, adding that the cornerstone of democracy is tolerance and cooperation between the government and the opposition for resolving the country's fundamental problems. This is unfortunate that

such an environment has not been created in our country yet. The main feature of the government and the opposition is to blame each other, abuse each other in harsh language and invoke the bitter past all the time," the President said. "The reason for this is quite clear. Struggle to free the country from the clutches of external enemies is one thing and establishment of good governance after gaining independence is another." He said the basic problem will not be solved by abusing each other or shifting all the blames on others. "It is possible to make error in governing the country. But rule or administration is not the monopoly of any individual or party. This is a continuous process. The lesson of history is that a good ruler first detects his own mistake and corrects himself before finding fault

Ashura on Apr 27

The holy Ashura will be observed on April 27 as the new Hijri year 1420 begins today, reports BSS. It was decided at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at the Islamic Foundation yesterday with its Vice-Chairman, Religious Affairs Secretary Mohammad Morshed Hossain in the chair. After reviewing information received from different districts, Met office and Islamic Foundation offices, the meeting reached a consensus that the moon of Muharram month was sighted across Bangladesh, including the capital city of Dhaka yesterday. The meeting decided that from today the first day of Muharram month of Hijri 1420 will be counted and the holy Ashura will be observed on April 27.

Police raid DU hall: 7 held, arms recovered

By DU Correspondent
Police in a pre-dawn swoop yesterday arrested a Chhatra League leader and six outsiders and recovered some arms and ammunition from Mohsin Hall of Dhaka University. The arrested are Jewel, a leader of DU unit of BCL and a resident of Shahidullah Hall, and outsiders Zillur Rahman, Masud, Quayes Ahmed, Shaiful Alam, Mamun and Hanif. They are also said to be activists of BCL but not students of DU. All of them were produced before court yesterday. Resident students of Mohsin Hall said police cordoned the BCL-dominated hall at about 4:30 am and arrested them. During the two and a half-hour raid, police searched some specific rooms at the hall and recovered one revolver and 35 bullets from one room and some materials for making bomb from another room. Soon after the raid, Shaiful Rahman and Shaikhat, the president and general secretary respectively of BCL unit at Mohsin Hall took 'control' of the hall. Both are activists of Abdul Wadud



What an irony!
Water shortages have led to demonstrations in the city, hurting hundreds of the hapless. But there is enough water for their comfort. Thousands of gallons were poured on the Paltan Maidan to kill dust ahead of yesterday's Mujibnagar Day meeting attended and addressed by the prime minister and her party and Cabinet colleagues. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

5000 police, BDR men deployed

Some 5,000 police and BDR personnel are being deployed in the capital city today to stave off possible trouble during the daylong hartal, reports UNB. Deployment of police at strategic points to deal with pro-hartal activists was decided at a meeting of senior police officials at the Razarbagh Headquarters. DMP Police Commissioner AKM Shamsuddin Ahmed presided over the meeting. The meeting apprehended that some trouble mongers might indulge in attacking shops, vehicles and public installations to create panic among the people. "Policemen have been directed to remain calm, quiet and exercise utmost patience in the face of provocation during

Kaptai Lake's water level falls further Power generation at day time stopped

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Apr 17: Further drop in water level in Kaptai Lake has forced suspension of power generation at Kaptai hydro electric project during day time. PDB sources said. Kaptai project now operates only 'peak-hours' in the evening to generate power on a reduced scale, the sources added.

Water level in Kaptai Lake came down to 82.1 MSL (mean sea level) yesterday from 84 MSL on April 4. On March 13, the water level was recorded at 91.57 MSL. Due to lack of rainfall, the water level continued to fall. Yesterday, only 131 MW of power were generated at Kaptai project in the evening. Earlier, it used to generate over 200 MW, the sources said. The port city faces a load-shedding of about 80 to 90 MW against the requirement of over 300 MW. Meanwhile, Met office

Another AJM worker dies

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Apr 17: Mostafa, 25, who was injured in Tuesday's clash between two rival labour unions in the Adamjee Jute Mills area, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the early hours today, police said. With this, the death toll due to the Tuesday's and Wednesday's clash rose to three and at least 300 were injured. Mostafa was a former worker at the AJM but the present CBA claimed that he was their activist, police said. Soon after the motion was rejected, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Sharad Pawar told reporters that his party would work towards providing a 'viable' alternative under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Pawar expressed gratitude to the BSP for voting against the motion and said a meeting between Sonia Gandhi and BSP leader Mayawati this morning

Clashes in city

By Staff Correspondent
Clashes between police and opposition activists took place in different parts of the city yesterday evening in which about a dozen people were hurt. Pro-hartal activists, who brought out torch processions to mobilise support for today's hartal called by the BNP-led alliance, set fire to two buses and a car. Police used batons and tear gas to disperse opposition activists at Mahakhali and Paltan crossing. Witnesses and fire brigade sources said a car was set afire at Satmasjid Road in the evening. Besides, a bus was torched at Hatkhola and another at Ulan in Rampura area. Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) activists clashed with police when

BNP, allies plan new programmes

By Nazmul Ashraf and Rezaul Karim
The BNP-led opposition alliance is likely to announce today new agitation programmes, mainly to protest the persisting power and water crisis in the country. The parties are planning to hold demonstrations later this month in front of the offices of power and water supply authorities in and outside Dhaka. Besides, the four-party alliance has plans to call another hartal on May 4, coinciding with the Meherpur-2 by-elections they are boycotting. But the announcement of the planned hartal is unlikely to come today. The fresh programmes were discussed at a meeting of the opposition liaison committee at the Minto Road official residence of Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia last night, meeting sources said. It also planned demonstrations at thana and district lev-

Ershad urges Khaleda to launch united movement

Jatiya Party Chairman Husain Mohammad Ershad yesterday urged the opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia to launch united movement against the inept and corrupt government to force it to step down, reports UNB. Addressing the inaugural session of the second National Council of Jatiya Party at Engineers Institution, Ershad suggested a summit of the leaders of four opposition parties to chalk out programme for realising one-point demand -- resignation of the government. He said solution of mounting problems facing the nation lies in dislodging the inept and corrupt government. "If the government does not want to go, it should be compelled to resign through a mass movement," said Ershad. Gen Ershad who ruled the country for nearly nine years.

Illegal hoardings get DCC stick

Staff Correspondent
Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has launched a month-long crash program to remove all illegal hoardings from the city streets and their adjacent areas. So far, hundreds of hoardings have been removed by the DCC teams in Mirpur and Gulshan areas. The teams are being led by the respective zonal officers who have recently been given magistracy status. The drive would eventually be spread to all the ten zones of the DCC, sources said. DCC officials however failed to give an estimate of the number of hoardings in the city but said that there are more illegal than legal ones. As per municipality law, the advertisers are required to obtain permission from the DCC before putting up such boards. DCC earns substantial revenue from advertising spaces in the city. But before permitting a prospective advertiser to erect a hoarding, DCC is supposed to consider environmental and technical aspects of the spot. A DCC source said an influential section was obtaining permission indiscriminately for 'lucrative' spaces and was reselling them for higher prices.

PM admits power, water crises 'Identify those making deliberate attempts to create mass anger'

By Staff Correspondent
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government is making all-out efforts to solve the power crisis and sought people's cooperation in improving the situation. She said there were "deliberate attempts" to create hindrances in smooth power supply at places to create mass anger. The persons responsible will be brought to book, she said. "Help us in identifying them, we will take action", Hasina told a discussion meeting on the occasion of Mujibnagar Day at the city's Paltan Maidan, organised by her ruling Awami League. A large number of Awami League leaders and workers and people in their hundreds attended the meeting. The Prime Minister, who also holds the portfolio of en-

Hartal observed in Chhatak: Manik demands SP's withdrawal

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Apr 17: An 8-hour hartal was observed at Chhatak under Sunamganj district today demanding immediate arrest of ruling party MP Muhibur Rahman Manik and his associates. Nagarik Forum, Chhatak, a platform of local parties including BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and a faction of Awami League also announced fresh programmes. All modes of transports were off the roads while several processions were brought out in the thana headquarters and Govindaganj Bazar. A meeting was also held near the Chhatak Bus Stand in the afternoon with Advocate Akikur Reza Choudhury in the chair. Syed Titumir, Angur Miah Chowdhury, Gias Uddin, Kabir Miah and Shamsuddin Ahmed addressed the meeting. The speakers demanded immediate arrest of Manik. Fresh programme including

BNP's rail-road programme in N-region Apr 22

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Apr 17: BNP will observe rail-road barricade programme in the country's northern region on April 22 demanding release of party MP Alamgir Kabir. The programme was announced through a press release issued by central organising secretary of BNP and Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation today. He warned the government of tougher programmes if oppression on BNP leaders and activists was not stopped.

Mustafa Faruk new envoy to India likely

By Staff Correspondent
Mustafa Faruk Muhammad is being appointed Bangladesh's high commissioner to India, diplomatic sources said. An Asian affairs specialist Faruk last served as envoy to Moscow and went on leave preparatory before retirement recently. Earlier, he was envoy to Myanmar and Vietnam. He is being appointed on contract basis.

Protesters block road for 3 hrs

FARIDPUR, Apr 17: Road communication between the capital and the district town remained suspended for three hours today as All-party Alliance put up a barricade at Madhukhal protesting attack on a Krishok League leader, reports UNB. Activists of the alliance barricaded the highway at Modhukhal at 10 am demanding arrest the attackers. They earlier brought out a procession in the thana and held a protest meeting on the highway. Syed Kabirul Islam, convener of District Krishok League and President of Modhukhal Thana Awami League, was allegedly beaten up by former convener of Krishok League Bipul Ghosh at the district office on Friday. He is being treated at the local hospital. Meanwhile police raided the village and town homes of Bipul

13 DB men questioned again Information regarding said heroin trader

By Staff Correspondent
Investigators have collected "valuable" information about a heroin trader from whom the DB team of AC Humayun Kabir had recovered heroin worth Tk 2.5 crore in the city's Demra area in February, a CID official claimed last night. CID so far recorded statements of two other alleged heroin traders, identified as Sona Mia and Shajahan. The CID also claimed that the two persons were arrested with heroin by members of a DB AC's team from Demra area about three months back. Although Sona Mia and Shajahan were arrested for carrying heroin, the DB men, after taking Tk 30,000 from them, produced the two before court showing that they were arrested under Section 54. The two got bail from the court, the official added. CID investigators interro-



BNP brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday in support of today's hartal. — Star photo

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Prayer Timings
April 18
Azan 4:30
Fajr 4:30
Zohr 12:45
Asr 4:45
Maghrib 6:25
Esha 7:30
Source: Islamic Foundation