



The Daily Star

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Ashura today

The holy Ashura, the 10th of Muharram, commemorating the supreme sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussein (RA), will be observed in the country today with due solemnity, reports UNB.

Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), and 71 of his relatives and followers were killed on this day in 680 AD at Karbala, some 110 km south of Baghdad.

Since then, Muslims across the world observe the 10th of Muharram with due religious fervour.

The day is a public holiday. President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

Bangladesh Television and Betar will broadcast special programmes highlighting significance of the day while newspapers will publish special articles.

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Cabinet strengthens privatisation agenda

The Cabinet yesterday approved the government's privatisation policy, designed to facilitate handing-over of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to the workers and employees on a priority basis.

The policy has also created scope for punishing those violating terms of agreements after taking over the divested SOEs. "If someone fails to fulfil conditions, the government would take back the enterprise concerned," Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed told The Daily Star.

The government would very soon enact laws in line with the policy. The privatisation policy was approved at the weekly Cabinet meeting held with the Prime Minister in the chair. According to the new policy, a 15-member Privatisation Commission (PC), will come into being. The chairman and two members will be full-time. Other members of the Commission will include six MPs, five ex-officio members, a representative from a professional group to be nominated by the government.

The five ex-officio members are the industries secretary, commerce secretary, finance secretary, SEC chairman and FBCCI president. The Commission will identify and prepare statements on the SOEs, scrutinise tenders and take necessary measures to hand-over the industrial units concerned. It will also estimate the assets and liabilities of the SOEs to be privatised.

The Commission will conduct necessary studies to implement privatisation policy of the government. If there is any barrier to privatisation, the Commission will take legal measures to remove them.

The Commission will decide on privatising an SOE, in case a second bidding for the unit does not attract buyers. But if the price of a unit, with long-term loans, is over Tk 25 crore, the Commission will require government approval before making a final decision about it.

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Thousands of computers go out of order

Star Report Innumerable computers across the country went out of order yesterday due to a widely circulated destructive computer virus that is programmed to affect computers operating on Windows 95 and 98 on April 26 every year.

Virus epidemic hits country

Some network computers of Dhaka Stock Exchange were also affected. Leading Internet service provider, Proshika Computers, has also become a victim. Panicked by the sudden virus epidemic, computer users were crowding computer service providers in the city yesterday.

Many latest anti-virus programmes like Norton Anti Virus or NAVC, Norton's Kill CIH, W9x, etc. could prevent the disaster if computer users were cautious about the virus attack. "These virus guards" are available free in the Internet. Interested users can obtain one such guard from the SYMANTEC Web Site.

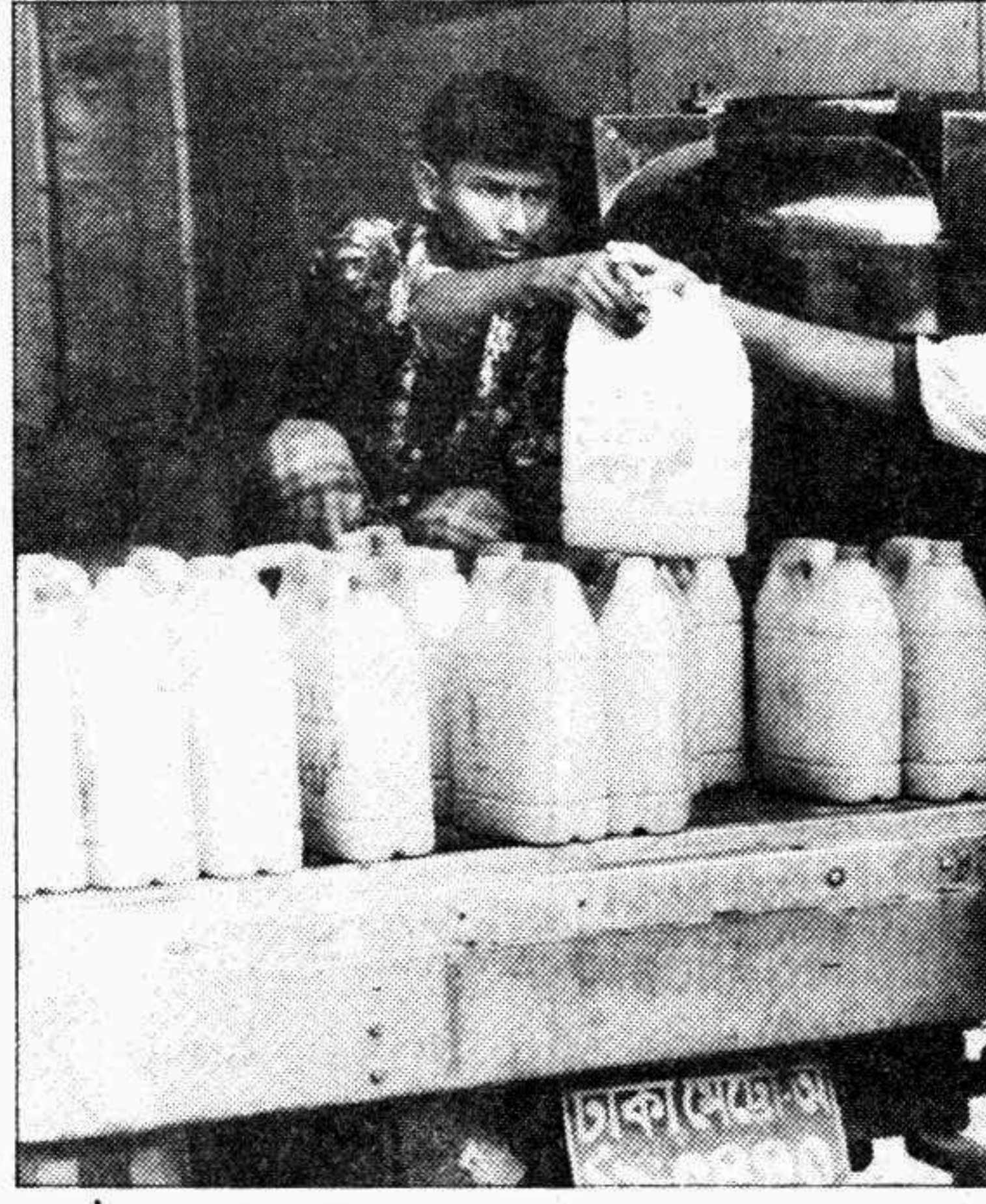


Sher-e-Bangla's 37th anniversary of death today

The 37th death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq will be observed today, reports UNB. Different political and socio-cultural organisations have taken elaborate programmes to observe the day.

Terrorists in Chuadanga slaughter 7

CHUADANGA, Apr 26: Seven persons were slaughtered at Bishnupur village under Damurhuda thana in the district Sunday night by terrorists of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party. The victims are Atiar Rahman, 50, Mohiruddin, 40, Inamul Hoque, 30, Akalay, 46, Abdul Hannan, 32, Moslem, 38, and Fazlur Rahman, 45.



Selling water in jerry cans in Ramna and Fulbaria areas is becoming a good business. — Photo : A K M Mohsin

Lok Sabha dissolved, fresh polls by Oct

NEW DELHI, Apr 26: Indian President K R Narayanan today dissolved the Lok Sabha, paving the way for fresh general elections either in June or in September-October this year. This followed India's BJP-led government's recommendation for fresh polls a day after frantic efforts by the mainstream opposition spearheaded by the Congress to cobble up an alternative floundered amidst bitter acrimony.

Water sells at Tk 5 a jerry can!

Administrative corruption at SEC alleged

Discontent among members of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) officers and employees is brewing over alleged irregularities over recruitment and promotion, insiders said. Allegations have it that rules are being flouted in hiring and firing of senior executives, causing serious resentment among the staff.

Hartal observed in Jessore



A procession was brought out in the city yesterday on the occasion of 'Holy Ashura'. — Star photo

JESSORE, Apr 26: A daylong hartal was observed peacefully in the district town today, reports UNB. Offices, educational institutions and shops remained closed during the dawn-to-dusk hartal while all modes of transport did not ply on the roads.

Hundreds arrested in Pakistan fearing sectarian violence

LAHORE, Apr 26: Police arrested hundreds of radical Sunni Muslims and the army was deployed throughout Pakistan's largest Punjab province today to prevent attacks on Shi'ite Muslim mourners who beat themselves, some with chains, knives and shards of glass, reports AP.

Holiday The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of Holy Ashura. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

Article Talking Good Governance Column: Lest We Forget... by Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad Page 4

Focus Assets into liabilities: Devaluing Bangladesh's political prospects Page 5

Prayer Timings April 27 Azan Jamaat Fajr 4-30 4-35 Zohr 12-45 1-20 Asr 4-45 4-55 Maghrib 6-30 6-33 Esha 7-30 7-35 Source: Islamic Foundation

The district unit of BNP called the hartal protesting a murder case filed against former BNP minister Tariqul Islam. The former minister was accused of killing R M Saiful Alam Mukul, editor of Dainik Runner. The hartal was followed by a protest rally at Daratana square, which was chaired by district BNP president Shahjiddul Islam Nayan. The meeting threatened to launch greater movement in the southwestern region unless the charge sheet is withdrawn immediately. The meeting also announced a hunger strike on Wednesday.

Kader Siddiqui hints at new political party

Awami League MP Kader Siddiqui yesterday hinted at a new political organisation of freedom fighters in the offing for preserving their interests risking even his exit from his own party and parliament, reports UNB. "I'm ready to leave the parliament in the interest of the freedom fighters. I'll not hesitate to say 'Assalamu Alaikum' to my party if it is disturbed by my activities," he told a gathering of freedom fighters. At the call of Kader Siddiqui some 400 freedom fighters joined the exchange-of-views meeting at Engineers Institution Auditorium. They addressed the meeting for three hours while Kader Siddiqui alone took about two hours from 2:15 pm.

Throughout Punjab province in a police crackdown early Thursday morning, said officials. Most of those arrested belonged to the Sipah-e-Sahaba or Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet, a radical Sunni Muslim group blamed for dozens of attacks on rival Shi'ite Muslims. The followers of the two sects differ over who was to lead the Muslim faithful following the death of Islam's Prophet Mohammed (SM). Shi'ite Muslims believed the grandson or Imam Hussein was the rightful heir. In the southern port city of Karachi, where there were two religiously motivated attacks last weekend, police and paramilitary troops were present.

BB lawyer tells court Beximco directors abused power to get unfair loans

The Bangladesh Bank lawyer yesterday told a High Court bench that the Beximco directors had acted in breach of public confidence and abused official authority to obtain loan on relaxed terms and conditions. The lawyer argued that section 17 of the Bank Companies Act dealing with vacating offices were introduced in order to create an even playing field for every businessman in the country. Four Beximco directors — Sohail F Rahman, Salman F Rahman, M A Quashem and Iqbal Ahmed — had been served with notices after they had failed to re-pay bank loans. Two were directors of AB Bank and the other two were of IFIC. The four later filed writ petition challenging the notices. Tania Amir, appearing for the central bank, pointed out that in the same country, borrowers, mostly poor women operating within the same legal framework, are paying back at a rate of 99 per cent under the micro-credit schemes. See page 11

Bombs exploded near PMO

A group of unidentified youths exploded bombs from a microbus when it stopped before policemen posted at the gate of the Prime Minister's Office at Tejgaon yesterday afternoon. The youths managed to flee. Police later rounded up 10 youths from Tejgaon and Bijoy Sarani in connection with this incident. Tejgaon police said two of the youths had hired the microbus from Chashara in Narayanganj to go to Ashulia. They had started from Narayanganj and then went to Kamarpura in Ashulia where six others joined them. All eight then started towards Dhaka. They went straight to a slum at Banani. One of them went to the slum and came back with a ploy bag. When the driver asked about the ploy bag, they said that there were sweets in it. But the driver was not convinced. Being suspicious about the youths, the driver tried to get rid of them. When he saw police in front of the Prime Minister's office, he stopped the microbus and asked help from police. Sensing danger, the youths exploded several bombs and fled away. Police said a team was sent to Narayanganj to trace out the youths who had hired the microbus.

BUET students go on rampage

A group of students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology allegedly went on rampage at the teachers quarters on the campus last night. The agitators were demanding withdrawal of expulsion order against a student of Civil Engineering Department. In the face agitation, the teachers and their families got out of the quarters for safety and staying there till the writing of this report at 12:30 am. One of the teachers told The Daily Star over telephone that they had called police but did not respond. The university authorities expelled the student concerned for two years as he had adopted unfair means in a class test about a month ago. The student appealed to the university's academic council to pardon him. The council then reduced the expulsion term to one year. Dissatisfied at the decision, the students went on rampage.