



HARTAL IMPACT

Survey finds a day of strike causes Tk 1,600cr losses to economy
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NATIONAL MOVIE FEST

Colourful celebration of 2nd National Film Day at BFDC
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SAUDI PRINCE FOR POLLS

Alwaleed also says it's "very important" to empower women Shura members
PAGE 7

Export goes haywire

Hartal-hit garment-makers go for air shipment; airport choked with goods

SHARIFUL ISLAM

In a scramble to meet tight deadlines amid frequent hartals, garment exporters have turned to air shipment, to stretch the cargo handling infrastructure beyond its capacity.

The storage facilities at Shahjalal International Airport are overflowing with cartons, with many lying in the open -- and exposed to the elements.

Outside, a long tailback can be found, bringing in more cargo for shipment.

"Till December, we needed seven cargo planes a week. But since January, we have been running seven to eight cargo planes daily. And yet, the cargo storage facilities are overwhelmed," said Arshel Arafat, assistant vice-president of Bismillah Airlines, one of the two private cargo carriers

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Economy hit hard

IMF warns against political instability

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing political instability is affecting the economic activities in Bangladesh, said a mission from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) yesterday.

As a result, the growth of gross domestic product is "expected to

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Boxes filled with clothes pile up at Shahjalal International Airport as the export-oriented garment industries opt for air to ship their cargoes instead of the usual shipment via sea. Frequent hartals have forced many factories to switch to expensive air freight.

PHOTO: SHARIFUL ISLAM

BNP banks on radicals

Keeps fingers crossed for April 6 to turn worse

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The BNP is now eagerly looking to the outcome of the radical Islamist groups' April 6 long march which, party leaders say, will largely determine its next course of action to intensify the one-point movement to oust the government.

BNP policymakers say that if Hefajat-e Islam, organiser of the long march, enforces nonstop hartals from April 7 in case the government obstructs the march, the BNP-led alliance will also step up tougher agitations.

Amid such a tense political situation, the main opposition party is preparing itself for a showdown on April 10 in the capital. Party chief Khaleda Zia is expected to announce the next spell of anti-government agitation programmes on the day.

"The prevailing political situation will dictate the type of the next agitation programmes," Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

On lending support to Hefajat-e Islam's long march towards Dhaka, he said: "We have extended our support because the march certainly has its political impact."

A series of hartals, road blockades and sit-ins like those by the Shahbagh protesters are under consideration of the BNP-led alliance, insiders say.

"We have empowered BNP chief Khaleda Zia to decide the mode of agitation programme," Abdul Latif Nejami, chief of Islamic Oikya Jote, a component of the BNP-led alliance, told The Daily Star on Monday.

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Blogger Asif arrested

Law minister goes back on remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday arrested blogger Asif Mohiuddin, who had been attacked by Islamist fanatics in January following alleged postings on the Internet "comments derogatory to Islam and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)".

The arrest comes a day after police captured bloggers Subrata Adhikari Shuvo, Rasel Pervez and Moshir Rahman Biplob in the capital in connection with similar offences.



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Govt may lose everything

Warnings come from within over blogger arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several senior lawmakers of the ruling Awami League-led alliance consider improper the government's strategy of handling the current political situation centring the April 6 long march towards Dhaka by radical Islamist groups.

They feared that the situation might turn out to be the biggest crisis for the government if it failed to take appropriate

measures.

In the face of radical Islamist groups' demand, the government arrested some bloggers, drawing widespread criticism from different quarters including the Gonojagoron Mancha. It also announced to take tough action against anyone for making derogatory remarks about Islam.

"The government put feet in two boats which will not reap any benefit [for the

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Hefajat warns govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will have to shoulder responsibility if any untoward incident takes place centring Saturday's long march, leaders of Hefajat-e-Islam Bangladesh threatened yesterday.

"If the government fails to extend its support to make the long march a success or hatches any plot to foil the programme, it [government] will be

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Govt action absurd

Citizens warn govt of consequences

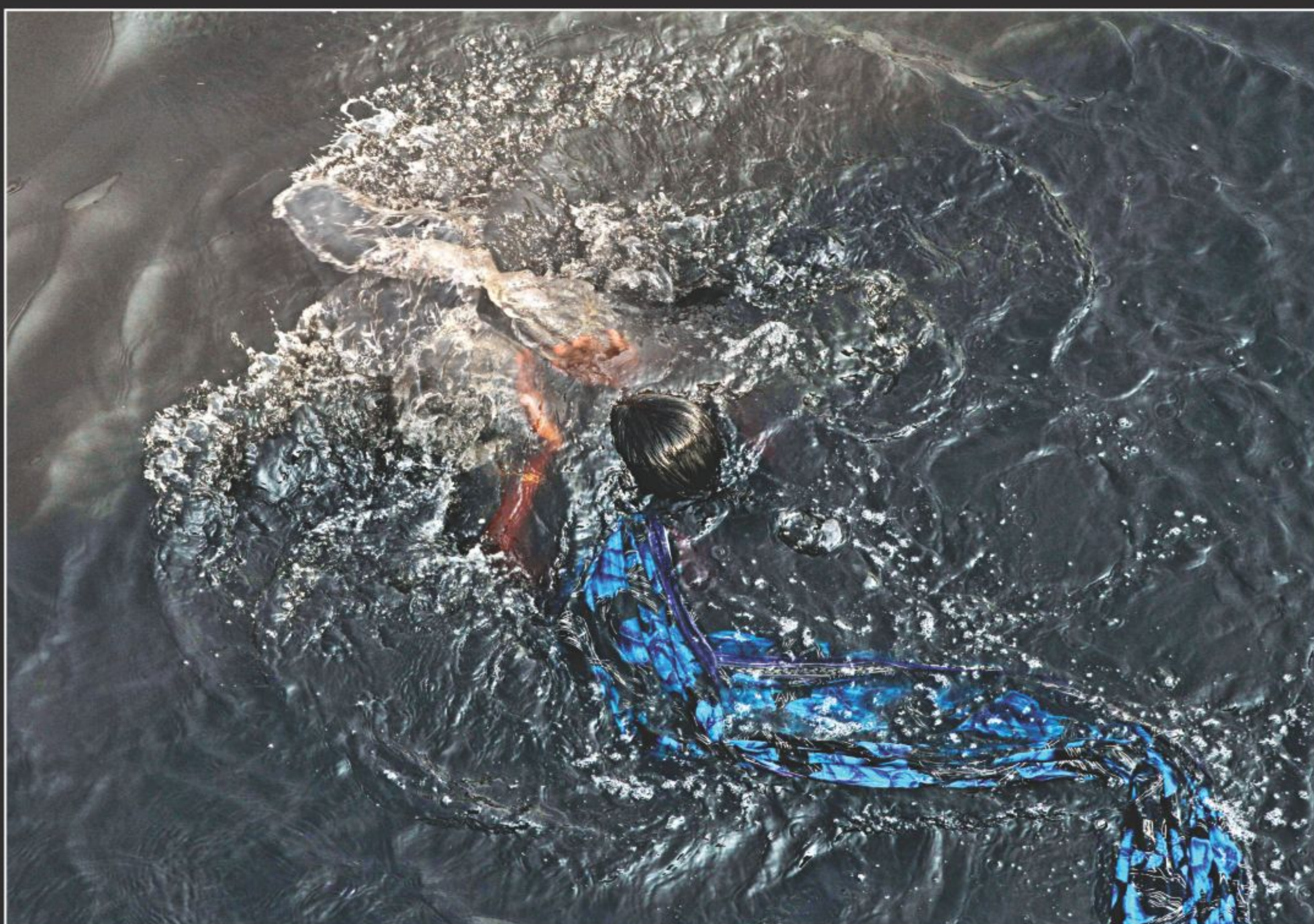
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Frustration ran high among citizens as the government arrested another blogger yesterday, accusing him of demeaning Islam. They urged the ruling party not to sacrifice values of democracy and the Liberation War to appease evil forces.

At a demonstration at Dhaka University, academics, activists, students, bloggers and citizens groups demanded that the government uphold people's

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A DANGEROUS DIP



A woman takes a dip into the murky polluted water of the Turag river near Kodda Bridge in Gazipur failing to find any place else to bathe. What cleansing is to be achieved from water as dark as tar remains a wonder.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Gas reality awaits projects

Govt plan to start 14 gas-guzzling power plants faces uncertainty

SHARIER KHAN and FAZLUR RAHMAN

Many gas-based power projects are facing uncertainty as a two-year-old high gas supply projection of Petrobangla has proved wrong.

The government is implementing in the next two years 14 large gas-based and three dual-fuel (gas or oil) power projects with close to 6,000 megawatt capacity -- equivalent to what the country regularly produces now.

These plants will need 800 to 1,000 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas by 2015. But Petrobangla's latest projection puts the supply increase by around 600 mmcf at that time. Experts put this figure even much below that.

While gas crunch has already kept several power plants idle, a few new plants are set to gradually start operation this year.

Most of the new power projects were initiated on the basis of Petrobangla's 2011 projection showing a supply increase by 2,465 million mmcf in December '15. This figure is more than double of what we get today.

But last year, Petrobangla Chairman Husain Monsur drastically cut this projection as some of the gas sector initiatives failed.

The Power Division, however, did not take this cut into consideration and went ahead with awarding contracts

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24-hr hartal from 6pm tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 25 pro-liberation organisations last night decided to call for a countrywide 24-hour hartal, from 6:00pm tomorrow (Friday), to resist

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AL certificate for 3 Jamaat activists!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned three leaders of the ruling Awami League in Satkhira to appear before it on April 16 for allegedly certifying three detained Jamaat-e-

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