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Inside Today

International



Pakistan welcomes US-Soviet agreement to stop supplying arms to combatants in Afghanistan
 Page 5

Article

Agricultural Mechanisation: No Displacement of Rural Labour
 Column: From LDC to NIC by Shahed Latif
 Page 4

Feature

Banking and Finance

The gods smile on Malaysia
 Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Newly-designed wheelchairs are fully adjustable so that patients can tailor the chair to their needs
 Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

ALWC meet

A meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee will be held at its central office tomorrow (Monday) at 3 pm, a press release said, reports UNB.

Voters with ink on fingers can vote

The voters with indelible ink in their fingers who cast votes in the by-elections on Wednesday last will face no problem in casting votes in the referendum. Election Commission has already instructed the presiding officers in those 11 constituencies where by-elections were held to allow the voters with indelible ink in their fingers to vote.

National Board of Revenue Notice

The date for advance Income Tax payment for the 1st quarter of the current financial year is September 15, 1991. The advance Income Tax payable by the concerned tax payer is paid through I T Form No 1-T-31(B) (Amended) challan. The tax payers should pay the advance tax filling in the said challan form as usual by replacing the figure "74(1)" with the figure "64" in as many places it occurs in the form.

It may mentioned that the financial limit of total income for payment of advance Income Tax is as follows:

- (A) For company resident in Bangladesh Taka 20 thousand.
- (B) For non-resident assesseees Taka 5 thousand.
- (C) For other assesseees Taka 60 thousand.

All assesseees concerned are requested to pay their advance Income Tax for the first quarter of current financial year relevant to 1992-93 assessment year under this system by September 15, 1991.

Simple interest @ 18% per year will be leviable if the advance Income Tax is not paid or paid at a lesser amount than due.

DPP(G)-10465-149 National Board of Revenue
 G-520 Dhaka.

Referendum today

Star Report

The nation goes to a referendum today on the question of endorsing the Constitution 12th Amendment Bill providing for switchover to a parliamentary form of government.

Nearly 6.23 crore voters are expected to cast their votes either to ratify the constitutional change or to retain the existing presidential system. If the majority voters cast 'yes' votes, the country will revert to a parliamentary form of government after 16 years of presidential system.

Presidential form of government is the legacy of the one-party BKSAL rule introduced in 1975 through the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

All the major political parties have called upon the people to give 'yes' votes to institutionalise democracy in the country.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Awami League, Five-Party Alliance and smaller partners of the Eight-Party Alliance and Jamaat-e-Islami have instructed their partymen at the grassroots level to make the referendum a success.

The Jatiya Party is divided on the issue although the party's parliamentary group voted for the 12th Amendment Bill.

The 12th Amendment Bill was unanimously passed in the

Jatiya Sangsad on August 6. The Freedom Party is actively opposing the 12th Amendment Bill and calling upon the people to reject the amendment by casting 'no' votes.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia called upon the people to cast 'yes' votes to go back to a parliamentary form of government. Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina urged the people to cast 'yes' votes.

The flood situation in the northern districts will cause difficulty in holding the referendum in those areas smoothly. In rest of the country adequate arrangements have been made to make the referendum a success. But the available reports suggest that the turnout may not be very high.

The Article 142 of the Constitution provides that the President shall have to call referendum seeking the verdict of the people whether to give assent to a bill changing the fundamental Articles of the Constitution.

Today's referendum is the first of its kind in our country seeking people's verdict for ratification of a change to the Constitution. Two referendums

were held earlier but not under this Article of the Constitution.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has completed all arrangements for holding the referendum throughout the country.

A total of 24,309 polling stations with 112,645 booths have been set up to conduct the referendum smoothly. The polling will begin at 8 am and continue till 5 pm without any break. The day is a public holiday.

The Election Commission has engaged 24,309 Presiding Officers, 111,479 Assistant Presiding Officers and 222,958 Polling Officers.

A total of 6,22,04,118 voters — 3,30,56,563 males and 2,91,47,555 females — are expected to participate in the referendum.

Counting of votes will begin immediately after completion of polling in each centre and special arrangements have been made to announce the results over Radio and Television.

The Election Commission has distributed leaflets and posters highlighting the significance of massive participation of the people in the referendum.

The Mass Communication Department put up slide shows in the cinema halls, television

and mobile video in the countryside and remote areas encouraging the people to participate in the referendum.

Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television will put up special programmes on the occasion.

Freedom Party, the lone campaigner for 'No' vote in the referendum, called upon the people to resist what it called the civil design by those who had earlier killed democracy in the country.

An emergency meeting of the party's city unit said the referendum was very significant in the national life after people's victory in the anti-autocratic movement.

The meeting held at the party office with Faruk Reza in the chair, also sought cooperation of all concerned to ensure massive participation in the referendum so that the voters could reflect their free opinion.

Retiterating his party decision to cast 'No' votes in the referendum, Maj (Retd) Bazul Huda, who attended the meeting as the main speaker, said the decision was taken to maintain balance of power between the parliament and presidency, keep intact the existing presidential form of government, and establish freedom of the judiciary.



BNP brought out a colourful procession in the city Saturday to campaign for 'Yes' votes in today's referendum. — Star photo

PM cancels visit to New York

Star Report
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia may not go to New York to address the United Nations General Assembly. She was scheduled to leave Dhaka on September 29.

According to a reliable source, the Prime Minister has decided to cancel the proposed visit in view of the flood situation in the northern districts and some other important agenda.

The holding of referendum and transfer of power are important political matters she needs to attend to. If the majority of the voters cast 'yes' votes today, she is expected to form a new government within this week. The presidential elections will also have to be held by the first week of October.

A source in the Prime Minister's Secretariat indicated that Begum Zia may visit the United States before the end of this year.

Tripura tribals want early repatriation of Chakmas

AGARTALA, Sept 14: Members of the Tripura tribal area autonomous district council, cutting across party lines, have demanded early repatriation of over 50,000 Chakma refugees to Bangladesh, now taking shelter in six camps in south Tripura district since 1986, reports PTI.

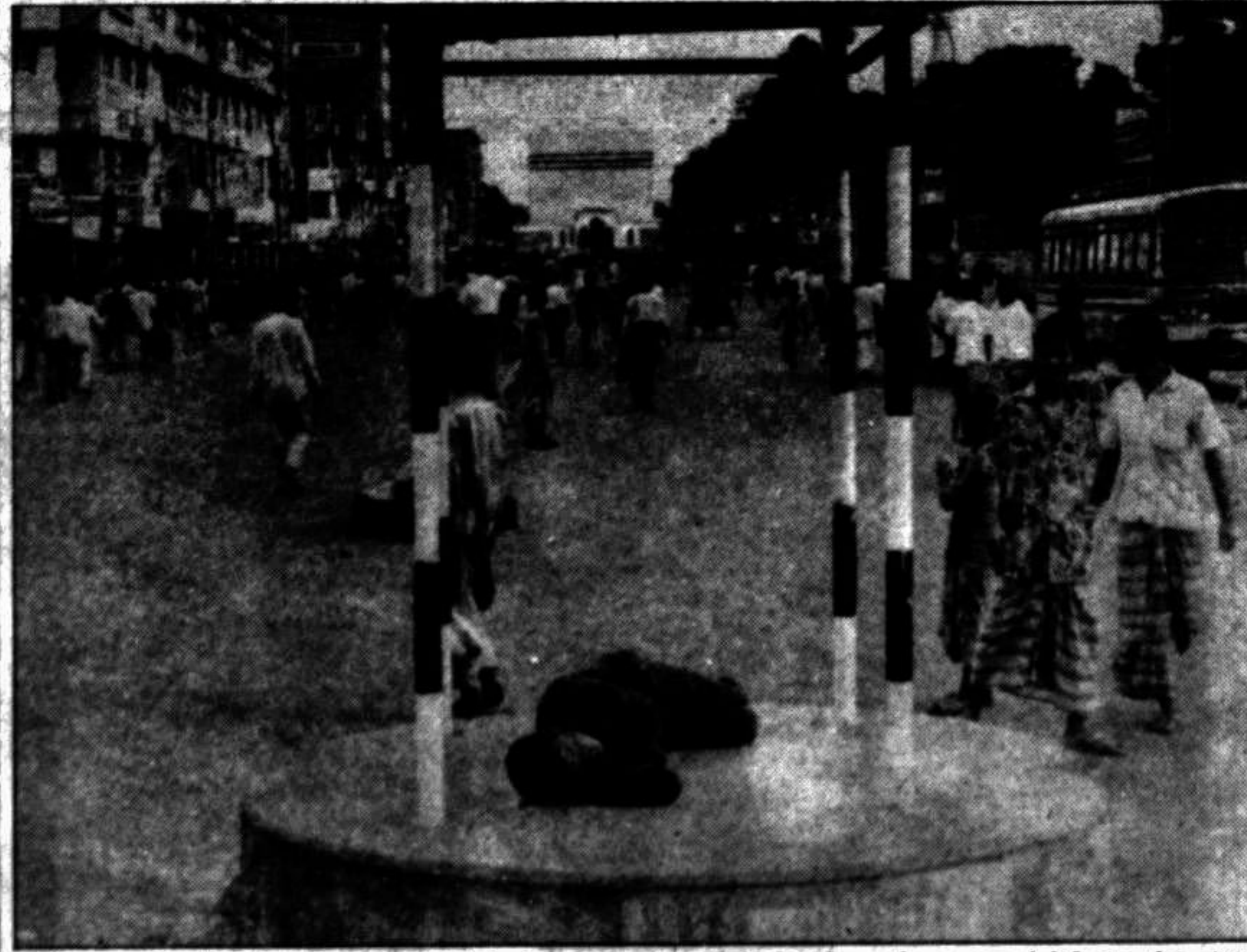
Participating in the debate on a private member's resolution on introduction of the innerline permit in the ADC area today, Debabrata Koloj of the opposition said the state government has settled the refugees in camps within the ADC areas without prior permission of ADC. This has affected the economy of the local tribal people in those areas, he said.

Nirmal Karnti Das of the ruling Congress (I) said the refugees are doing cheap labour violating camp rules. They were also destroying local forest and other resources of the area, he said adding, they should go back as soon as possible.

Earlier, Chief Minister, Sudhir Ranjan Majumder who met newsmen here, said that the state was pressuring the centre for taking up the repatriation issue with the Bangladesh government at the highest level.

Sporadic violence marks 6-hour hartal: Several persons injured

By Staff Correspondent



A street urchin having a peaceful sleep on a traffic island as the normal life in the city almost came to a halt during a countrywide six-hour hartal called by Awami League Saturday. — Star photo

A half-day hartal, called by the Awami League, was observed in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country Saturday.

The six-hour hartal from six a.m. was marked by stray incidents of violence in the capital in which several persons were injured.

Police resorted to lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells to disperse pro-hartal agitators in some places in the city. Arrest of 53 persons from different city areas during hartal hours was confirmed by police.

The nationwide hartal was called to protest the alleged attempt on the life of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and widespread violence and rigging by BNP activists during the by-election polling on Wednesday. The flood affected districts were exempted from the hartal.

A large number of AL activists were on the streets of the capital during hartal hours in small processions chanting anti-government slogans.

Contingents of riot police, were deployed in the city
 See Page 12 Col. 3

New cabinet soon after referendum

By Moinuddin Naser

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) with its absolute majority in parliament is expected to form a new cabinet under the amended Constitution immediately after the official announcement of the result of the referendum.

Besides the formation of a new cabinet, the BNP will also have to take a decision about the election of President under the changed Constitution.

Though the post of President is a decorative one under the parliamentary form of government, the selection of President has become an important issue for BNP.

If anyone from among the present cabinet members is

elevated to the post of President the whole process of the reshuffling may be sorted out at a time.

It is obvious that Begum Khaleda Zia will retain the post of Prime Minister, who heads the government under the parliamentary system.

BNP insiders said that the incumbent Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas, Foreign Minister Mustafizur Rahman, Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz and Education Minister Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury are among the favourites for the presidency.

If Abdur Rahman Biswas becomes President, incumbent
 See Page 12 Col. 7

Diarrhoea in flood-hit areas

By Staff Correspondent

Downflow of waters aggravated the flood situation in eleven districts including Chapainawabganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Kishoreganj, Magura, Chandpur and Manikganj Friday inundating more areas. Part of Madaripur town went under water.

In Kushtia, Pabna, Sirajganj and Rajshahi, the situation remained unchanged but critical while it improved further in the upper catchment areas of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari and Panchagarh.

The flood waters that destroyed habitats and crops, disrupted communication systems and displaced millions of people, have brought diarrhoeal diseases to follow its recession. Twentyfive people died in Rangpur, 27 in Kurigram and five others in Sirajganj so far.

The government has fielded 1,065 medical teams in 14 worst-hit northern districts to combat the situation, aggravated by scarcity of drinking water, medicine and soaring prices of essentials at places.

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have sent messages to same district authorities seeking to know immediate requirements in the face of inadequate government relief supplies.

In Manikganj the situation deteriorated further where a minor boy was drowned. With the death of Abdus Sattar (9) of Jianpur village in Daulatpur upazila, the toll rose to 4 in five days of flooding.

District relief officials said about 40 unions in six upazilas, including the low areas of the pourashava, had been affected by the flood. About 1.25 lakh people have been marooned and about 90 per cent standing crops submerged, they said.
 The swelling Jamuna was
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USSR ready to talk N-arms cuts

MOSCOW, Sept 14: The Soviet Union on Friday agreed to a US proposal to discuss cutting superpower arsenals of short-range nuclear weapons, Tass news agency reported, says Reuters.

It said US Secretary of State James Baker proposed opening the disarmament talks when he met General Vladimir Lobov, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Lobov backed Baker's proposal to discuss cutting short-range nuclear weapons — artillery shells and missiles —

Tass said. Earlier this month, US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said the United States was ready to discuss pulling the so-called battlefield weapons out of Western Europe.

Cheney said the United States had made big cuts since Soviet forces withdrew from Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Pact collapsed, and it was now time for Moscow to cut its forces.

Baker, the first high-ranking US official to meet Soviet and republican leaders since

last month's failed Kremlin coup, called for US-Soviet military ties to be stepped up. In Baker's view, these contacts should be intensive, without breaks and in the interest of both parties.

Military ties between the superpowers have strengthened under Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, whose policies have led to reductions in both sides' nuclear arsenals.

At a superpower summit in Moscow this July, Washington and Moscow signed a landmark treaty cutting long-range.

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