

Dhaka, Saturday, May 9 1991

Interview with OIC Secretary General

Working for Greater Unity of Islamic States

Garment Industry

With the conclusion of the three-day Bangladesh Apparel and Textile (BAT) Expo '92 in the city yesterday, the readymade garment sector has further advanced its case in the world market.

If the achievement so far is quite impressive, the projected performance in the years ahead is rosy still. In the coming fiscal year, the sector stands to earn no less than Tk 5,700 crore and, the news of all news, 60 per cent of which will simply turn into profit—provided that the industry uses indigenous raw materials, fabrics in particular.

That the factories use local raw materials and still retain quality is important. For, the textile industry, which has so far failed to gain its past glory, has now a golden chance before it to wrest the initiative from the foreign mills now dominating the world market.

Behind all the success already made possible and yet more to be done so, the single most deciding factor, however, is cheap labour. No scope for denying the fact. Involved in the garment industry are as many as 5,50,000 employees—4,50,000 of them being directly employed and the rest 1,00,000 indirectly.

All this doubtlessly points to the neglect the workers are subjected to. Therefore, the need for improving the facilities at garment factories and implementation of uniform service rules and code of conduct both for employees and the employers cannot be overemphasised.

Furthermore, the government of President F W de Klerk, buoyed by the backing it received from white voters in the referendum, is taking a much harder line. The African National Congress (ANC) is finding it much more difficult to get its proposals accepted at Codesa.

It wants transitional councils, which it had earlier proposed would run the country in this period, to have only advisory powers that the president could overrule. The ANC and its allies are demanding executive powers and control of public broadcasting, the security force and the economy.

US and Myanmar

Among many mixed signals received here over the implementation of the recently signed agreement on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, a heartening statement comes from William B Milam, the US ambassador to Bangladesh reiterating his country's support to Dhaka on this issue.

It will certainly hurt the interest of both Myanmar and Bangladesh if the present accord fails. This country does not want it to fail. So, at this stage, we would rather not speculate on our course of future action, beyond expressing our appreciation for the commitment of support from Washington.

At this moment, what is equally important for the United States is to strengthen international support in favour of the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar and for the transfer of power from the military junta to a democratically-elected government of Aung Sang Suu Kyi. Here, too, there are mixed signals coming from Yangon, with an impression rapidly gaining ground that military authorities in Myanmar may well be more flexible than in the past, perhaps even exploring ways for coming to terms with the realities in their strife-torn country.

THE Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference His Excellency Hamid Al Gabid was on a visit to Bangladesh at the end of last month to see for himself the extent of Rohingya refugee problem and to discuss with the government as to what OIC could do towards its solutions.

DS — One of the primary goals of OIC is to promote economic and social development of the Islamic countries. How far have you succeeded in promoting that goal?

HG — I must tell you frankly that OIC's major problem is limited financial resources. It is our biggest weakness and I hope that member countries will help to solve it. I think it amounts to very little to create a very useful organisation and then to run it without adequate resources.

DS — So what do you intend to do about it?

DS — Any success?

HG — Too soon to say. We are also studying the possibility of providing loan from the Islamic Development Bank to fund our development projects. But it is still at an exploratory stage.

DS — Another important goal of OIC is to foster closer unity among the Islamic countries. How far have you succeeded in that direction?



Dr. Gabid, a Nigerian, has a Ph D in Islamic Banking. He served as the Executive Director of the Islamic Development Bank, as Under Secretary of the Ministry of Planning before becoming Prime Minister of Nigeria in 1982, in which capacity he served till 1987. He was awarded King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam. He became Secretary General of OIC on January 1, 1989.

DS — Will it be right to say that financial problems do not have much of it. OIC has only one office outside its headquarters and that is in New York, for the United Nations. Compared to bodies such as the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and the Arab League (both of which are regional bodies) who have offices in practically all parts of the world, an international body such as the OIC is very poorly represented globally.

DS — Will it be right to say that financial problems...

HG — Are blocking us from carrying out our mandate. DS — We have been hearing about the formation of an Islamic Common Market for a long time. What is happening about?

DS — We have also heard about the information programme of the Islamic countries. What is it?

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DS — Any sign of such unity coming about?

DS — What are some of your personal goals. What would you like to achieve as the head of OIC?

DS — Thank you, your Excellency, for your time.

De Klerk Toughens his Line in Multi-party Talks

Mondli Makhanya writes from Johannesburg

As Nelson Mandela faces the break-up of his marriage to Winnie, he finds negotiations towards a new South African constitution getting tougher. Since President de Klerk won a big Yes in the white referendum his government is taking a harder line in the talks. Meantime, he paid a visit to Nigeria where the unbelievable happened.



THE UNLIKELY COUPLE: Presidents Babangida and de Klerk swayed to the tune of Reach Out and Touch Somebody New

FOR South Africa's constitutional negotiation process, the overwhelming Yes vote in March's white referendum was a signal to fly, but the process is now stuck in a crisis.

Ongoing violence in the townships is fast becoming the major obstacle to negotiations, as chief Mangosuthu Buthelez's Inkatha Movement demands that the Zulu King be represented at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa).

After the referendum, the government announced its proposals for an interim executive to rule the country in the transition period and oversee the elections for a constitution-making body.

It wants transitional councils, which it had earlier proposed would run the country in this period, to have only advisory powers that the president could overrule.

The government also insists that such an interim authority cannot be installed before the township violence — which claims on an average 10 lives a day — is halted. The ANC says such an interim authority is the very body that will help quell the violence.

The government has also rejected an ANC call for an international monitoring force to observe the violence.

The government is closing in with Buthelez on the Zulu King issue, with de Klerk agreeing with the Inkatha leader that he will see to it that the King is admitted to Codesa.

The ANC is now seeking to draw in the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) with which it convened the Patriotic Front (PF) last year.

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I have not seen or heard even a single example which runs parallel to those radio, TV and cinema presentations. Therefore, I request the producers to objectively observe life in general and particularly in academics and present this objectivity to the public so that the succeeding entrants to Dhaka do not have such a subjective perception.

Mad Abdur Rouf, Department of International Relations, DU

Fate of dictator

Sir, At long last, Mr Najibullah's reign in Afghanistan has

observed the violence. An ANC demand for an international force has been given greater impetus by a recent rampage through an ANC-supporting squatter camp by members of the 32 Battalion, which comprises Angolans who helped the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the Namibian bush war.

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remember though they were Islamic countries, many countries subscribed to the ideology and the world view of the Eastern Bloc countries. This created division among the Islamic countries. With the fall of socialism that divisive factor has disappeared. Now we hope the Islamic countries can come closer. The emergence of new Islamic states from the old Soviet Union is also a very encouraging factor. We hope these new States will bring a new dynamism to the OIC.

The right-wing movement is also fearing marginalisation. Having been trounced at the referendum, pressures are strong on the right-wing to join the negotiations. It is now clear they do not have the support of the majority of the white population and their capacity to wage an armed struggle has been severely hampered.

Sections of the movement want to go into talks and argue there for "self-determination" for white people. The more militant section, realising that constitutional avenues are now closed, are preparing for an armed struggle.

A bomb exploded at a Johannesburg funfair. A group calling itself the White Wolves claimed responsibility, boasting that such attacks would continue until whites won "self-determination."

Tensions have already claimed their first casualties. A member of parliament was expelled from the official opposition Conservative Party (CP) after making a parliamentary speech in support of talks "with other races."

Secretary-general of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Beweging Piet Rudolph stepped down from his position a week after the referendum, citing dissatisfaction with leader Eugene Terreblanche's autocratic leadership.

Rudolph, something of a folk hero in right-wing circles, favours the right going into Codesa to make a public stand for their policies and then — if their policies are rejected — walking out to launch an armed struggle.

In the CP tensions are also running high and a split is imminent. The CP was the main force that urged de Klerk to test his reform at the polls. They became prominent after their victory in the Potchefstroom by-election, forcing de Klerk to call the referendum.

The CP was unsure as to whether it should accept the bait or not, and decided to participate only after a stormy

causes meeting. Now party members admit they should not have fallen for de Klerk's bait.

It is widely anticipated that more liberal members of the party will walk out and go to Codesa, and its 71-year-old leader Andries Treurnicht will retire from politics. The end of the party would then be in sight.

Amid all these fragmentations, brazen talk of the Third Freedom Struggle abounds in right-wing circles. This refers to the war that the Afrikaner republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal unsuccessfully waged against the British empire at the turn of the century.

Nobody underestimates the right's ability to wage terror campaigns, but it is unlikely to derail the negotiation process.

The right's emotional appeal seems to have fizzled and de Klerk seems to have the bulk of the Afrikaners behind him. He is riding on a crest, having neutralised the right and strengthened his position against the left opponents at Codesa.

All that is left now is for him and his party to fare well in elections for the constitution-making body, expected before the year's end. He has already started forays into the black areas to promote his party.

In between, de Klerk has made a breakthrough in black Africa by making a successful trip to Nigeria, as CAMERON DUODU reports here from Lagos.

THE unimaginable happened. President Ibrahim Babangida and his wife, Maryam, linked arms with President de Klerk, and swayed to music to the words of Diana Ross and the Supremes; Reach Out and Touch Somebody New.

As the words echoed around the banquet hall of the Sheraton Hotel in Nigeria's new capital, Abuja, other Nigerians linked arms with South Africans and swayed in harmony.

Nigeria, one of the most implacable enemies of the white minority regime in Pretoria, had publicly embraced its former foe. Babangida said he had invited de Klerk to encourage him to speed up the reform process.

In his speech Babangida likened the efforts of de Klerk to those of the black heroes who "blazed the trail in the long march to racial harmony," including Chief Alther Lithuli, Steve Biko, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Robert Sobukwe, Oliver Tambo and the "indomitable Nelson Mandela."

It was as if the speech writers had never heard of Nelson Mandela's denunciation of de Klerk's "double agenda," nor of

MONDLI MAKHANYA is on the staff of the Weekly Mail of Johannesburg. CAMERON DUODU is a freelance Ghanaian journalist.

To the Editor...

'Holier than thou'

Sir, We have a saying in the sub-continent that before you peck into your neighbour's backyard peek into your own. The self-appointed policeman of the world was apparently so busy pecking into his neighbour's backyard, he forgot all about his own. The race riots in the major cities of the USA is ample proof. Whither human rights, and justice, for which America is famous? Racism is put to shame, at this blatant display in the land of 'honey and gold' and equal opportunity.

P Haque, DHHS, Dhaka Cantt.

Radio, TV, FDC

Sir, Since my boyhood, whatever the radio and BTW dramas and BFDC-produced films I enjoyed, a considerable number of those depicted: an

innocent boy comes to Dhaka from a rural village. In the early days of this Dhaka life, he passes his times in troubles. Then either he gets a job in a big company and subsequently the company owner's daughter falls in love with him which ends in marriage, or he starts studying and emerges as an excellent student in his class. Subsequently, a very rich man's daughter, who happens to be his class-mate falls in love with him, which is also shown ending in a happy marriage.

I find all these as subjective presentation by the mass media. The producers of this sort of dramas and films do not have any objective perception. I am a student of Dhaka University and in my circle, I am known to be a good student. In my department, there have been many rich men's daughters. Keeping aside love

and marriage, even I could not create a good friendship with any one of them in these long five years.

I see, love is rather highly commercial. The students get involved in love after thorough cost-benefit analysis.

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