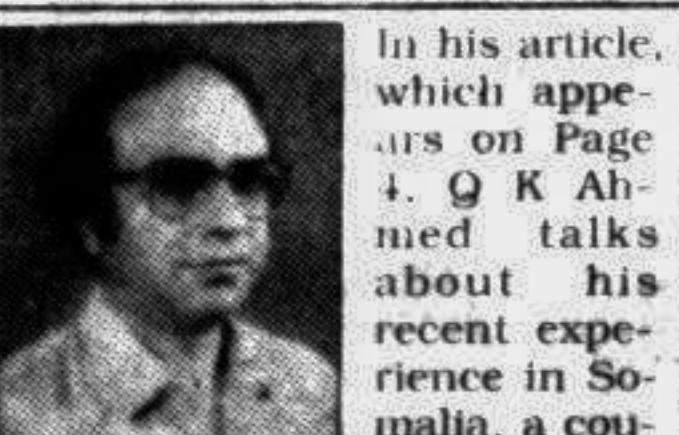


Untying the
Gordian Knot
of Our Politics

A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS
AND ARTICLES ON THE CUR-
RENT POLITICAL CRISIS



In his article, which appears on Page 4, Q. K. Ahmed talks about his recent experience in Somalia, a country which is being torn asunder by sectarian conflict. Pointing to our homogeneous population, single language and other unifying factors, Dr Ahmed suggests that there is no fundamental reason why we can not work in harmony.

Cautioning our political leaders, Dr Ahmed warns that narrow political interest may drive us the Somalian way, with disastrous consequences for our future. This warning our political leader must heed.

Tomorrow : Interview of Jatiya Party leader Barrister Moudud Ahmed.

Inside Today

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Business

Prime Bank will start with new outlook on March 29.

Dhaka will get \$16m from OPEC Fund for International Development
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Special Feature

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Weekend Magazine

The city we live in; Urban situation: Colonial Dhaka; Bir Kanya Kalpana; and Travelling by the dead
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Rising Stars

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Exciting Opportunity for Young Readers of The Daily Star

You can influence the outcome of the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen by sending in your own views, suggestions and ideas directly to the conference.

For details see Rising Stars, Page 14.

Tight security as heads of state start arriving

WSSD declaration to be signed Sunday

From Masud Hasan Khan

COPENHAGEN, Mar 8: The UN-sponsored World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) entered its final stage of negotiations today ahead of the arrival of heads of state at the Danish capital here.

Leaders of 185 nations are expected to approve the final WSSD document and announce a Plan of Action regarding the three main themes — poverty, unemployment and social exclusion — on Sunday, the concluding day of the summit.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to arrive here this evening leading

See pages 9, 10

said.

Danish authorities today stepped up security around the Bella Centre, the main venue of the WSSD meeting, hotels of delegations and other important places to ensure peaceful

holding of the meeting.

Bangladesh sources informed that the final declaration, when passed at end of the summit, might reconfirm a 20:20 formula — "agreeing on the mutual commitment between interested developed and developing partners to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of ODA and 20 per cent of national budget, respectively, to priority social programmes."

Besides, an agreement on the debt issues covering only the least developed countries, and a fresh commitment to

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia talking to Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz at Zia Airport prior to her departure for Copenhagen to attend the UN Summit on Social Development yesterday. The Danish Charge d'Affaires Knud Kjaer-Nielsen is also seen.

— PID photo

AL Rajshahi convention opens Hasina accuses govt of partisan policies

Violence marks hartal in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 9: Sporadic incidents of violence and blasts of cocktails marked the half-day hartal here today. Most of the vehicles except some rickshaws were off the roads.

Shops and markets were closed. Govt offices and private firms were open but attendance was thin. Delivery of goods to and from the Chittagong Port remained suspended during hartal hours.

The Chhatra League, Chittagong unit, gave the call for the strike in protest against transferring 12 BCL leaders from Chittagong to the Comilla jail and to press the demand for their immediate release.

Referring to terrorism and vote dacoity, Sheikh Hasina said the BNP government had surpassed all past governments in these corrupt practices.

She charged the government with rigging the by-elections, vitiating educational institutions with terrorism, violence and killing voters.

Terming the government's foreign policy subservient, the AL chief said it had failed to protect our national interest.

Police, however, dispersed

See Page 8 Col 7

AL Rajshahi convention opens
Hasina accuses govt of partisan policies

By Nazmul Ashraf

continuing corruption, nepotism and politicisation of administration, terrorism and violence.

She accused the ministers and the ruling party MPs of exploiting the poor people and said BNP had lost credibility and confidence of people as it had violated all its election pledges.

Listing the present government's unfulfilled pledges, Sheikh Hasina said, it had so far materialised 95 commitments out of 353 made to the nation.

Referring to terrorism and vote dacoity, Sheikh Hasina said the BNP government had surpassed all past governments in these corrupt practices.

She charged the government with rigging the by-elections, vitiating educational institutions with terrorism, violence and killing voters.

Terming the government's foreign policy subservient, the AL chief said it had failed to protect our national interest.

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With its March 15 deadline for the government to accept the eight-point demands approaching, the Sramik Karmachari Okya Parishad (SKOP), the umbrella body of the country's leading trade union societies, is charting a fresh round of agitation aimed at realising the demands. SKOP sources said.

The new programmes, including a possible 48-hour strike across the country, are expected to be enforced later this month, they said. The agenda and timing are to be finalised at a meeting of the SKOP's central leaders scheduled for March 14 at 4 pm.

In the meantime, the SKOP leaders will have dialogues with representatives of the various sectoral labour organisations to assess their views regarding the planned agitation.

The SKOP leaders will meet trade union delegates of the road transport, railway, steel

and engineering, agriculture, telecommunication, garments, river transport and other sectors between March 10 and 14.

The March 15 deadline for the government was set at a national convention of the SKOP held in the city on February 18 last.

The workers of the jute-textiles-yarn mills, who enforced a 96-hour strike and road-rail barricade throughout the country February 13-16 demanding rise in their wages and other issues similar to the SKOP charter of demand, are expected to join the SKOP programme. The SKOP leaders have had talks with the jute-textiles labour leaders for a combined agitation by workers of all sectors.

According to sources, chastened by past experience the SKOP this time around are unlikely to seek support from the political parties. Rather, they are in favour of confining

Therefore, this time, the

See Page 8 Col 1

their pre-agitation activities within the ambit of normal trade unionism. However, at some stage the major political parties may be consulted once the agitation programme is announced.

In the past, the SKOP had sought the cooperation and blessings of the leading political parties but the response was never satisfactory because many of the demands of the workers are not compatible with the economic policies of the mainstream opposition parties including the Awami League and the Jatiya Party.

The AL and the JP did not directly lend support to the workers' demands although their labour fronts were always part and parcel of the SKOP.

These two parties always tried to tactfully avoid the actual issues through their ambiguous stands regarding the demands of the workers.

Therefore, this time, the

See Page 8 Col 1

Barings went bust amid massive losses in Asian markets. The bank blames trader Nick Leeson, now in jail in Germany and fighting extradition to Singapore, but Leeson's lawyers say he is a scapegoat.

Our agreement ensures all

See Page 8 Col 7

PM arrives in Copenhagen

COPENHAGEN, Mar 9: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia arrived here today to attend the first ever UN sponsored World Summit for Social Development beginning Saturday, reports BSS.

After the ceremony at the Copenhagen International Airport Begum Zia drove in a ceremonial motorcade to hotel Sheraton where she will be staying.

Earlier Begum Zia left Dhaka in the morning for Copenhagen to attend the summit.

National leaders from all over the world will attend the two-day summit.

At the summit the Prime Minister will stress on the need to create an enabling atmosphere that encourages human creativity, embracing human dignity, human rights and tolerance and promotes

See Page 8 Col 5

Bane or Boon?

COPENHAGEN, Mar 9: Afzal Qader got 50 US dollars a day for food and a chance to see Denmark. But unless things change fast, the Bangladeshi doctor thinks that's all he'll get at this week's global poverty summit, reports AP.

"If there really is debt relief, and if there really is an effort to give Third World countries access to markets, then may be something can come from this," the Bangladeshi delegate said midway through the summit.

"But most things are being done on the basis of politics," Qader said Wednesday. "It's just talk, not backed up by substance. Of course, it will be waste of our time and money."

The 193-nation summit was heading toward rejection of firm conditions for debt relief, expanded foreign aid and social spending. Donors may be asked only to give more aid money on a "case-by-case" basis.

Three new private banks, out of the seven approved by the cabinet recently, are set to start operation by June, including one to be launched on 29th of this month, central bank sources said.

The Prime Bank Limited with former minister Dr R A Gani and renowned banker Lutfar Rahman Sarker as its main sponsors is scheduled to start operation on March 29, while the Dhaka Bank and the Southeast Bank, with A Hy Sarker and M A Quasem, former FBCCI chief as the main sponsors respectively, will start business by June.

Sponsors of four other approved banks, including two joint ventures — one with the Netherlands and the other with Saudi Arabia — have sought three months' time to submit relevant papers to the central bank to start dealings in the second half of this year.

Each of these new banks would start business with an

initial paid up capital of Tk 200 million and branches in the capital and the port city of Chittagong, the sources said.

A Bangladeshi Bank official said these new actors would

create a competitive atmosphere in the banking sector,

prompting the existing ones to

improve the quality of their services and efficiency.

The change will also force

the banks to be more innovative

in introducing new products,

thereby easing the excess liquidity problem in the banking sector," the official said.

According to sources, excess liquidity is the second biggest problem of the banking sector after bad debts since more than one-third of the total deposits of Tk 360 billion with the banks are now lying

idle.

The four banks which are

expected to start business in the latter half of the year, are

See Page 8 Col 7

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