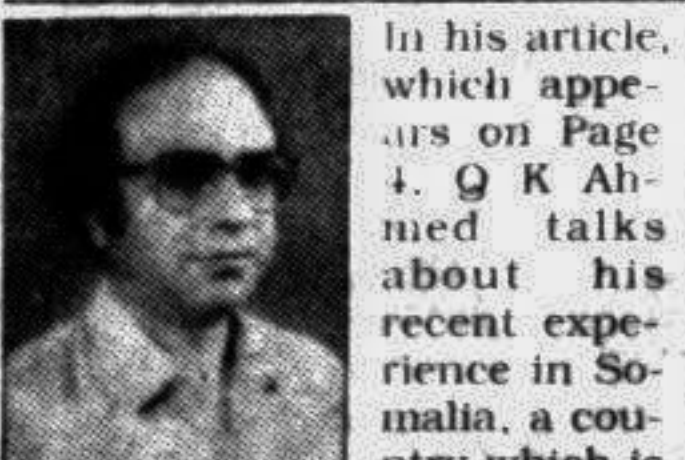


Untying the Gordian Knot of Our Politics

A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS AND ARTICLES ON THE CURRENT 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 Somali 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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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

A 47-member Bangladesh delegation, according to sources, is scheduled to attend a meeting of the nine most populous nations as well as call on a number of world leaders including the Queen of Denmark, they

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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 Gham 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

RAJSHAH, Mar 9: Awami League president Sheikh Hasina today accused the government of pushing the country towards destruction by its partisan policies, reports UNB.

Addressing the Rajshahi divisional convention of the party at Zila Parishad auditorium here today she urged people to intensify the current struggle to oust the corrupt and inefficient government.

She arrived here on Wednesday to address the convention attended by leaders and workers of Rajshahi district and city, Chapainawabganj, Natore, Naogaon and Pabna districts.

Hasina inaugurated the convention, attended by some 1,168 thana and union level representatives and about 5,000 workers. She released white pigeons and unfurled the national flag in front of the auditorium to mark the opening of the convention.

Addressing the party workers Hasina said her party had launched crusade against the

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 buying, Sheikh Hasina said the BNP government had surpassed all past governments in these corrupt practices.

She charged the government with rigging the by-elections, violating 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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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.

Police said, some 10 picketers were arrested from different points of the city during hartal hours.

There was chase and counter chase between police and BCL activists at the Bipani Bitan crossing and in front of the MES college when the law-enforcing agency did not allow holding of rallies there.

Police, however, dispersed

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SKOP gears for fresh action as deadline draws near

By Nazmul Ashraf

With its March 15 deadline for the government to accept the eight-point demands approaching, the Samik Karmachari Oikya 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

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

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: Afzalul Gader 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," Gader 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 special spending. Donors may be asked only to give more aid money on a "case-by-case" basis.

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Wasim Akram to make Dhaka debut tomorrow

Sports Reporter

"Pakistani paceman Wasim Akram is expected to arrive in the capital today to play for joint holders Abahani Krira Chakra in the Navana Premier Division cricket league.

Akram, arguably the most deceptive left-arm quickie who completed his registration formalities last year just before Pakistan began a three-month tour of South Africa and

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Barings reopens for business

LONDON, Mar 9: Barings, the investment bank whose spectacular crash shook the financial world, reopened for business today after being purchased by ING Group of the Netherlands, reports AP.

ING, a banking and insurance conglomerate, signed its agreement Wednesday night to take over Barings by picking up its liabilities and filling the coffers with new cash — at a cost of 660 million pound (1.06 billion dollar).

Although Barings was getting back into operation around the world, two of its businesses, a Japanese stock division and Singapore futures trading division, would not immediately resume trading until "a few technical issues" are resolved, ING said.

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

Gen Manzur's murder Emdad sent to jail after making statement

Star Report

Major (Retd) Kazi Emdadul Huq, arrested in connection with the June 1981 murder of Major General Abul Manzur in Chittagong, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail Wednesday after making a confessional statement before a magistrate.

Our court correspondent reports, Emdad was produced before the court of Magistrate Md Abdul Hannan in the evening. He reportedly made a long confessional statement under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The former soldier, who had lately gone into the garments business, was sent to the Central Jail at around 10 pm Wednesday night. Plainclothesmen of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

were present at the time.

The court house was almost empty when Emdad, so far the only accused named in an FIR lodged with Panchlaish thana of Chittagong on February 28 last by the brother of the late General, was produced before the magistrate two days ahead of the expiry of an eight-day remand granted by the court earlier for questioning.

Police sources said that he was taken to the court at such an unusual hour mainly to avoid the press photographers and reporters.

Earlier, on March 2, Metropolitan Magistrate Abdul Hashem, upon a request for a two-week remand for completing interrogation, had granted

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3 new banks by June

By Sohail Manzur

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 Lutful Rahman Sarker as its main sponsors is scheduled to start operation on March 29, while the Dhaka Bank and the Southeast Bank, with A Hye 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 Bangladesh 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 to stay in competition, 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

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Raushan's position: JP awaits Ershad's signal

Star Report

The Jatiya Party hierarchy is waiting for a directive from jailed leader H M Ershad to finalise the standing of recently inducted presidium member Raushan Ershad in the party lineup, reliable JP sources said.

"What will be her position? Will she be the number one or be placed under acting party chief Mizan Chowdhury and second-in-command Moudud Ahmed? These questions must be answered by Ershad," the source said on condition of anonymity.

Despite misgivings among many senior leaders Raushan Ershad was included in the 33-member presidium late last month on the instructions of the deposed president and JP founder who, felt the former first lady should actively enter politics.

The presidium, which currently has 28 members, is the highest policy-making body of the party.

The source, a central committee member, said that speculation and apprehension is widespread among the rank

and file of the party that Begum Ershad will be made a co-chairperson of the party.

"The senior leaders are worried about such a decision which might split the party," the source added.

The source also said that already there is discontent among the party leadership with one former prime minister and some of his associates already having sided with Raushan Ershad. Also, significantly, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Ershad's vice president, has been withdrawn as counsel from most of the cases for which Ershad is on trial, he pointed out.

Khandaker Mahbub Hossain and Mahbubur Rahman are the main counsels for Ershad in

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Looking Back at March towards Independence

On this day in 1971, the army was withdrawn from the Dhaka city to the barracks. Despite a general feeling of agitation and excitement, the law and order situation improved in response to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call for peace. All means and networks of communications started functioning properly. No police personnel were deputed in the city area, while the Awami League volunteers were working for the maintenance of law and order.

(More on page 4)

Boarding bridges at ZIA open

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday morning inaugurated four newly-constructed boarding bridges at Zia International Airport for passengers' convenience, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated four newly-built holding lounges at the airport connected with the boarding bridges.

The boarding bridges, Civil Aviation officials said, would provide passengers modern facilities to board and leave aircraft safe from rains, sun, noise or dust.

The four holding lounges connected with the bridges can accommodate 1,600 passengers.

Cabinet Ministers, senior officials were present at the inauguration of the modern embarkation and disembarkation facilities.

Special prayers were offered for the progress of the country.

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Indian rice arrives

Fifty wagons with rice arrived at Darshana railway station from India, an official handout said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

These rice will be supplied to Jessore godown as per agreement. Besides 81 wagons with rice also entered Bangladesh through three private organisations. These rice are being sent to Parbatipur and Bhairab for distribution.

Another two ships M V Fanthom and M V Olympic Mentor will arrive in Chittagong Port Friday with 63 thousand metric tons of rice from the United States of America.

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