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NEWS BRIEFS

EPB team starts Europe tour Sept 19

A six-member Bangladesh delegation led by the Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Shamsul Alam Gazi leaves here on September 19 to explore possibilities of exports of footwear, leather and leather goods in the European market, reports BSS.

Prakrishi's action programme

By Staff Correspondent

Engineers, Agriculturists, Physicians and BCS cadre members will abstain from work from 11 am to 1 pm on Sunday and Monday demanding implementation of their 17-point demands. At a press briefing yesterday in the city, the Prakrishi, Krishibid, Chittagong Civil Service Kendriya Sangram Parisad (Prakrishi) leaders said that although the Prime Minister had accepted four of the 17 points, including a selection grade of Tk 4100-6500 scale for all officials, get those have not been implemented.

440 Rohingyas go home

COX'S BAZAR, Sept 16: Four hundred and forty Rohingyas refugees of 91 families voluntarily returned to their homes in Myanmar through three transit camps at Teknaf here today, reports BSS.

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MFA phase out likely to send garments sector into tailspin

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh's garments industry may face a serious jolt with phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). The country's billion dollar ready-made garments industry is now bracing itself for the possible cost push effect the Harkin Bill.

The Harkin Bill will deny goods manufactured using child labour into USA. Bangladesh has been named as a country with incidence of child labour by senator Harkin during his presentation of the bill to the US senate.

The MFA governs trade in textiles and clothing. Negotiated in 1974, the MFA has had four extensions until now. The last couple of extensions were linked to inconclusiveness of the Uruguay Round of trade talks.

The MFA is a web of bilateral agreements establishing country-specific import quotas. The agreement is managed by a Textiles Committee of 41 signatures which is chaired by the GATT Director General.

The MFA import quotas discriminate between countries and at least half of the global

trade in textiles and clothing is affected by this discrimination. During the 1980s clothing exports of India, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand came across MFA barriers.

With the MFA becoming increasingly binding for her regional competitors Bangladesh was allowed more and more room in the US and European market. Only a small share of Bangladesh's export categories—are subject to quota restrictions. This, coupled with availability of low-cost labour, contributed to the phenomenal

growth in the readymade garments industry. The Eighties also saw foreign firms relocating their clothing production and export base to Bangladesh in a bid to bypass severe quota binding in their erstwhile home countries.

The timing and modality of the MFA phase out is still uncertain as it is linked to the Uruguay Round discussions. But, the threat of such a phase out in the medium-term is real.

The successive shocks of

See Page 12 Col 6



A RAJUK bulldozer seen demolishing unauthorized constructions over an area of fifteen bighas of land in Fakirpool area in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Bosnian Serbs, Muslims sign new accord for peace

GENEVA, Sept 16: International mediators said today they were calling all three parties in the Bosnian conflict to a meeting in Sarajevo on September 21 to consider signing a peace accord.

Spokesman John Mills told Reuters the mediators, Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, took the decision after overnight talks with Bosnia's Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic and a top Bosnian Serb official.

Mills said Izetbegovic and the Bosnian Serb official, the rebels parliamentary chairman Momcilo Krajišnik, had signed a joint declaration on ways to achieve peace.

After agreeing the declaration following secret overnight talks, Izetbegovic left for the airport, his destination was not immediately known.

But the Muslim-Serb accord added a provision for a referendum to be held on a mutually agreed date in all three estates on the question of whether citizens of any particular republic agree to remain in the union or leave the union, reflecting a Serb demand.

The agreement goes on to meet a Muslim concern, saying

dum to see whether any of the three states want to withdraw from the union after the country is divided along ethnic lines.

The agreement, together with a similar Muslim-Croat accord signed Tuesday in Geneva by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, would be added to a peace package already negotiated, the document said.

It added that the whole package could be signed at a meeting of the leaders of the warring parties at Sarajevo airport Tuesday morning.

The Muslim-Serb and Muslim-Croat agreements would assign working groups to iron out the remaining differences over the borders of Bosnia among the three ethnic groups.

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The agreement goes on to meet a Muslim concern, saying

that the Muslim republic would retain Bosnia's seat in the United Nations even if the Croats or Serbs withdraw.

Lord Owen of the European Community told The Associated Press after a hastily arranged meeting between Izetbegovic and an influential Bosnian Serb ended Thursday morning that he hoped had laid the foundation for a further meeting with the parties in Sarajevo on Tuesday, referring to the leaders of Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs.

Owen and the other top mediator for former Yugoslavia, UN Thorvald Stoltenberg, brought Momcilo Krajišnik, speaker of the self-styled Bosnian Serb parliament, to Geneva late Wednesday for a meeting with Izetbegovic.

John Mills said the two were working on a way to clear Serb-Muslim differences so that peace talks that collapsed on Sept 1 can restart.

Owen, who spoke as he left for Istanbul, said, "we will be shuttling in the region from now until Tuesday seeing all the principles."

More on page 5

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