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GM QUADER ON GSP

Ticfa signing delay might be linked to the US bid to scrap the benefit

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BORORIAR MELA

The ages-old fair in the village of Bororia celebrates tradition

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MUBARAK APPEAL ACCEPTED

Egypt court orders the ex-dictator's retrial over the killing of protesters

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GARMENT SAFETY

Europe now takes US cue

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The European Parliament is set to hold a discussion on Wednesday on the working conditions in Bangladesh's garment factories.

The discussion on Bangladesh is part of a three-day plenary session starting today.

Parliamentarians will also talk about health and safety at work, occupational medicine, pay structure, labour rights, trade union and corporate social responsibility in Bangladesh, according to the European Parliament website and the commerce ministry in Dhaka.

The move comes in the wake of the Tazreen fire that killed at least 112 workers, the commerce ministry said in a document, citing a letter from the European Union (EU) sent through the Bangladesh embassy in Brussels.

"We have received a letter from the EU a few days ago and we have already replied to it," Commerce Secretary Mahub Ahmed told The Daily Star by phone.

In a separate letter, the Bangladesh ambassador urged the commerce ministry to urgently take all necessary measures to prevent any kind of "negative propaganda"

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A devotee cannot hold his tears yesterday during the Akheri Munajat of the first phase of Biswa Ijtema, one of the largest Muslim congregations in the world. More photos on page 3.

Lakhs join Ijtema's final prayer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lakhs of Muslims sought world peace and divine blessings for mankind and the Muslim Ummah as the first phase of Biswa Ijtema concluded yesterday with final supplication -- Akheri Munajat.

Indian religious scholar Maulana Zobayerul Hasan led the 16-minute munajat at the Ijtema, the second largest congregation of the Muslims after the hajj, on the bank of Turag in Tongi.

Braving bitter chill and transport crisis, devotees of all ages from home and abroad including women joined the munajat.

The gathering spilled over to the adjacent roads

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Ex-NSI chief in the dock

Hospitalised yet went to Hawa Bhaban days before attack

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

A few days before the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally, the then NSI boss Abdur Rahim visited Hawa Bhaban, the alternative powerhouse of the previous BNP-led government, while he was receiving treatment in a military hospital in Dhaka.

Yousuf Hossain, a National Security Intelligence (NSI) official, yesterday said this in his testimony to a Dhaka court as a prosecution witness against his former boss Brig Gen (retired) Rahim in two cases filed in connection with the grenade attack.

Rahim, who stood in the dock during the testimony, looked angrily at Yousuf.

Rahim was the NSI director general when the grenade attack was made on

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Abdur Rahim

KILLING OF 6 STUDENTS

Cops cleared

Charges pressed against 60

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion yesterday pressed charges over the 2011 killing of six students at Aminbazar against 60 people who do not include any policeman.

"The investigator submitted the charge sheet following a neutral probe and implicated only those found guilty," Rab Director General Mokhlesur Rahman told The Daily Star last night.

Police were not involved; they reached the spot after the killing, he claimed, contradicting the findings of three probe bodies.

All the committees, one formed by the High Court and two by police, found complicity of some cops of Savar Police Station.

Eight policemen were even suspended for their alleged involvement in the killing after the judicial probe body submitted its report on September 8, 2011.

Contacted yesterday, Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, director of the Rab's intelligence wing, said some policemen had faced demotion for their faults and negligence in duties. But none of them committed a criminal offence.

In the early hours on July 17, 2011, a crime gang killed the youths near the Aminbazar bridge on the capital's outskirts, took the bodies more than half a kilometre away at Keblarchar on the advice of police and called

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Target 9

PM goes to Russia today; nuke, defence purchase deals to top agenda; interest rates unclear

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves for Russia today to sign nine deals including two crucial agreements on \$1 billion defence purchase under the State Export Credit and financing \$500 million preparatory work for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

The deals will be inked during Hasina's visit on January 14-17, said Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at a press conference yesterday.

Dipu Moni however expressed her ignorance about the rate of interests of the State Export Credit for financing the nuke power plant and the defence purchase.

She said detailed negotiations were conducted by the Economic Relations Division, but hastened to add that Bangladesh made the best efforts to get the best deals.

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brac

Fellow traveler in women's journey to progress

Heartiest congratulations to **Wasfia Nazreen**, as she becomes the first Bangladeshi to reach Mount Vinson, the highest point in Antarctica.

BRAC family is proud of its Goodwill Ambassador, a symbol of our efforts in empowering women

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KALPANA KIDNAP

CID probe vexes all

Brother Kalindi tells court of the crime 16 years back; court ruling Wednesday

SUSHMITA S PREETHA and SHANTIMOY CHAKMA

Unhappy with a CID report on the abduction of Kalpana Chakma in 1996, a Rangamati court yesterday set Wednesday to decide whether there would be a judicial enquiry.

The additional chief judicial magistrate of Rangamati said the Criminal Investigation Department report could not be accepted as it failed to provide the court with a fair and an impartial account.

The judge yesterday said he would consult relevant documents before deciding whether a judicial enquiry or further investigation would be the best course of action.

On the night of June 12, 1996, a few men, allegedly led by an army officer, kidnapped Kalpana, the then organising secretary of Hill Women's Federation, from her home

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Kalindi Kumar Chakma

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