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BANGLADESHI WOMEN WORKERS IN LEBANON

# Sorry tale of torture, abuse

PORIMOL PALMA

She had long been dreaming of leading a decent life.

In May last year she flew to Lebanon to take up the job of a maidservant as a way of making her dreams come true.

But within a few days on the job, 22-year-old Hasina Begum's dreams turned into nightmares.

Her employer, a young lonely Lebanese landlord, demanded from her something more than just what she had been hired for. As she dismissed his indecent proposal, she was confined to the house, tortured and molested.

"Those memories still make me cry... It is better begging in Bangladesh than working in Lebanon," she said, pointing to the marks of injury on her body.

"I was hardly given any food. In solitary confinement in a room, I had no idea what Lebanon looked like," Hasina told The Daily Star about her atrocious enslavement for three months.

As she could not take it any more, one day she somehow managed to escape from the house.

Failing to trace Hasina, her family members in Bangladesh contacted the local recruiting agent that had sent her abroad. The agent later arranged her repatriation.

In a small makeshift room in Charwalai village of Manikganj, she still suffers pain from the injuries to her eyes.

A Bangladeshi manpower broker of the recruiting agent had arranged her job. The broker, though, took away her passport and job contract. Now she cannot even file a complaint with the authorities concerned and seek compensation.

She took out a loan of Tk 1 lakh to pay the expenses of landing the foreign job. She now feels the money only brought pain and sorrow into her life.

Returning home empty-handed, she had to borrow again to survive. Her "lofty" dreams have trapped her in a vicious cycle

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PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

A road at the capital's Shahbagh is hazy in dust causing difficulties to pedestrians and drivers. Transporting of sand and earth for a nearby construction site and also ground digging to install utility line contribute to the cloud of dust. The photo was shot a few days ago.

## Correction



The photograph published in yesterday's The Daily Star with the news item headlined "Pankaj Saran next Indian envoy", was incorrect. This is the correct photograph of Pankaj Saran, high commissioner-designate of India to Bangladesh. We regret the error.

## Maldives violence Dhaka urges restraint

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been closely following the recent events in the Maldives and considers these developments as internal affairs of the country.

"As Bangladesh considers these developments to

## CONTEMPT CHARGE

# Pak court rejects Gilani's appeal

AGENCIES

Pakistan's top court yesterday threw out a last-ditch appeal from embattled Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, ordering him to appear in court on Monday to be indicted for contempt.

If convicted, Gilani faces six months in jail and being disqualified from office in a case fanning political instability that expected to force elections within months in the country troubled by al-Qaeda and Taliban violence.

If Gilani is removed, it does not necessarily mean the government will fall as the ruling coalition has the numbers in parliament to elect a replacement.

But a protracted court battle could weaken the administration and damage the ruling Pakistan People's Party's chances in the next general election expected by 2013.

The Supreme Court is now insistent that Gilani appear for the framing of contempt charges over the government's two-year refusal to ask Swiss authorities to reopen graft cases against President Asif Ali Zardari.

"The appeal is dismissed," said chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

Zardari and his late wife, Benazir Bhutto, were

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## Nine jailed over London bomb plot

Convicts are Bangladeshi, Pakistani descents

STAR REPORT

Nine British nationals of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin who plotted to bomb London Stock Exchange and build a terrorist training camp have been jailed.

BBC online says three of the men -- all members of an al-Qaeda inspired terror group -- received indeterminate sentences for public protection at London's Woolwich Crown Court on Thursday.

The court heard they had planned to raise funds for a terrorist camp in Pakistan and recruit

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# Blasts kill 25 in Syrian city

REUTERS, Amman/beirut

Twin bomb blasts hit Syrian military and security buildings in the northern city of Aleppo yesterday, killing 25 people in the worst violence to hit the country's commercial hub in the 11-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.

Mangled, bloodied bodies as well as severed limbs lay on the pavement outside the targeted buildings, as shown in live footage on Syrian television, which consistently portrays the revolt against Assad as the work of foreign-backed "terrorists."

No one claimed responsibility for the attacks in Syria's second city, as officials put the total death toll in the two blasts at 25. But they came as Assad's forces grow more ferocious in operations to stamp out the popular uprising.

On another front, army tanks massed outside opposition neighbourhoods in the western city Homs yesterday morning after a week of bombardments that have killed dozens of civilians and drawn condemnation from world leaders.

Activists in Homs said shelling resumed sporadically in the morning and they feared a big push was imminent to storm residential areas of the city that has come to

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# Govt has to wait further to get metro rail fund

Japanese envoy tells The Daily Star

REZAUL KARIM

Bangladesh may have to wait further to receive a Japanese fund of \$1.8 billion for the metro rail project as the financier is still reviewing the scheme's feasibility study.

The loan would have been cleared by now, had the government endorsed in last August the metro route passing through Bijoy Sarani as per a survey of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica).

The government later changed the route through Khamarbari, making the project's financier Japan take a second look at the venture.

"The Jica has completed its feasibility study. We have to work it out first before making a final decision," said

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FULL INTERVIEW ON PAGE 15



Shiro Sadoshima



Tonnes of imported fertiliser are left to rot away in the open at Baghabari port in Sirajganj due to shortage of buffer depots. Inset, fertiliser is being unloaded from a vessel but no room is left for them in any of the 14 depots of the region. The pictures were shot recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## 5 lakh bags of urea kept in the open

Space constraints in N-region depots

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR  
TOPU, back from Baghabari, Sirajganj

More than 25,000 tonnes of urea is at the risk of damage as it has been kept in the open on the bank of Jamuna river in Sirajganj and Pabna due to shortage of buffer depots.

Of the amount, some 20 thousand tonnes were piled at Baghabari port in Sirajganj while about five thousand tonnes at Nagarbari port in Pabna in early January, port sources have said.

The fertiliser (five lakh bags) was imported from China for the 16 northern districts to be used in the current Boro season (January-May). Each 50-kg bag of urea is sold at around Tk 1,000 in local market.

The 14 buffer depots in the region are all filled up with fertiliser, said Altaf Hossain Sarkar, a lessee of Baghabari port.

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