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# Back home, traumatised

## 81 women workers return from KSA with scars of physical, mental abuse by employers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Halima Akhter was so traumatised and physically weak that she was struggling to walk after landing at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Sunday night. None of her relatives was there to receive her.

She is one of the 81 women who returned from Saudi Arabia by a Saudi Airlines flight around 10:00pm after facing various forms of physical and mental abuses by the employers or agents in the kingdom. All of them went there as domestic workers.

"Of the 81, we found that three women were physically very weak and mentally upset. One could speak a few words, but the two others could not say anything," said Tanvir Hossain, assistant director at the Probashi Kallyan Desk at the airport.

He said they then rushed the three to Kurmitola General Hospital. The women were later referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Dr Bilkis Begum, coordinator at DMCH One-Stop Crisis Centre, yesterday afternoon said only one of the three could say she returned from Riyadh. "The other two could not utter a single word. They were too tired. They were undergoing treatment."

Until they can speak, the DMCH cannot examine them, she added.

Yunus Ali, 65, father of Halima, one of the three, told this

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Faced with a shortage of water, women and children take long walks to a waterbody to bathe and do laundry at Sreepur tea estate in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila. Inset, children in the area collect water from a well that has almost run dry. The pictures were taken last week.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Bottled water of 5 brands unsafe

BSTI says in report to HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) yesterday submitted a report to the High Court saying that it has found bottled water of five brands to be unsafe for drinking and 10 others to be safe after examining their quality.

According to the test reports, the five brands are: Yummy Yummy, Aqua Mineral, CFB, OSMA and Simmin.

Ten brands with safe water are: Vistal Fresh, Mukta, Aquatin, Mum, Kinley, Oasis, Pran, Sala, Crystal and Disha.

Deputy Attorney General Mokhesur Rahman, who placed the test report before the HC on behalf of the BSTI, yesterday told The Daily Star all the ingredients necessary for safe bottled water were not present in the water sold by the five companies.

During the hearing of a

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## LAND OWNERSHIP

# Men possess 6 times that of women

## Says Oxfam report; women hold only 20-30pc of total wealth in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of men land owners is six times higher than women land owners in the country, according to an Oxfam report. In terms of total wealth, women only hold 20-30 percent, said the report released yesterday.

Having less wealth means that women have fewer resources to cope with crises like illness, it said.

The picture is similar in India, Pakistan and several African countries.

WEALTH GAP GETS WIDER

The wealth divide is getting wider by the moment, it said.

The world's 26 richest people own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of humanity, Oxfam said, urging the governments to hike taxes on the wealthy to fight soaring inequality, reports AFP.

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# May refuses to rule out no-deal Brexit

## Promises to get more concessions from EU on plan to prevent customs checks on Irish border

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May sought to break the parliamentary deadlock over Brexit yesterday by proposing to seek further concessions from the European Union on a plan to prevent customs checks on the Irish border.

With little time left until the United Kingdom is due to leave the European Union on March 29, there is no agreement in London on how and even whether it should leave the world's biggest trading bloc, and a growing chance of a dramatic 'no-deal' exit with no provisions to soften the economic shock.

After her Brexit divorce deal with Brussels was rejected by 432-202 lawmakers last Tuesday, the biggest defeat in modern British history, May has been searching for a way to get a deal through.

She told parliament she could not take a "no-deal" Brexit off the table as there was no approved alternative yet, and that the EU would be unlikely to postpone Britain's exit date - determined by the "Article 50" withdrawal notice - without an exit plan.

"No-deal will only be taken off the table by either revoking Article 50, which turns back the results of the referendum - the government will not do that - or by having a deal, and that is what we are trying to work out," May said.

She said another referendum would strengthen the hand of those seeking to break up the United Kingdom and could damage social cohesion by undermining faith in democracy.

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## Awami Olama League wants ban on BPL

### AL says it has no links with the Islamist group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Awami Olama League yesterday demanded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) be banned, claiming that the popular cricketing event was "producing gamblers".

The organisation, which claims to be pro-ruling Awami League, also called for "identifying" all non-government organisations and their activists who are working to root out child marriage from the country. It termed them "anti-Islam".

According to the organisation, there was also no need for establishing a "minority affairs ministry" and formulating a "minority protection law" because "those would be discriminatory and communal".

The demands were

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## Total lunar eclipse woos sky watchers



AFP, Washington

An unusual set of celestial circumstances came together over Sunday night and the wee hours of yesterday for sky watchers in Europe, Africa and the Americas, where the moon was fully obscured before lighting up again with a faint red glow.

In the streets of Mexico City, Los Angeles and Paris and in the Moroccan desert, moon gazers turned to the sky to observe the phenomenon, around midnight in the Americas, and shortly before dawn in Europe and Africa.

The eclipse lasted about three hours: during the first hour the full moon was gradually swallowed up by the shadow of the Earth, then an hour of total eclipse where it was not invisible but instead appeared tinted in hues of red, orange and pink,

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## KSA to deport 250 Rohingyas to Bangladesh

### Says activist group

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Saudi Arabia is planning to deport 250 Rohingya men to Bangladesh, in what will be the second forced deportation by Riyadh this year, an activist group has told Al Jazeera.

Saudi Arabia is home to almost 300,000 Rohingya, according to Nay San Lwin, campaign coordinator for the Free Rohingya Coalition, who urged authorities to stop the

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## PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 22

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-43 7-15

JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-47 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## 'SHOOTOUT' WITH COPS

# Top-listed yaba dealer shot dead

STAR REPORT

A "top yaba trader" was killed in a "gunfight" hours after his arrest in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar early yesterday, said police.

The deceased, 35-year-old Shamsul Alam Prokash alias Bormaiya Shamsu, was from West Sikkardpara of Hnila union and his ancestors had come from Myanmar.

He was one of the top yaba traders as per a list prepared by the home ministry. He was also an accused in 10 narcotics cases, said Prodip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge (OC) of Teknaf police.

The "gunfight" between police and Shamsu's accomplices took place around 4:00am when the law enforcers took him to Damdamia area under Hnila union for recovering yaba tablets, the OC said.

Shamsu was arrested in Hnila area on Sunday evening, he added.

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A coconut with 1,663 yaba pills stashed inside. Detectives caught suspected drug dealer Rakib Hossain Babu, 30, with the pink pills at Zila Parishad Market in Chattogram city yesterday. Rakib told police that he had earlier hidden yaba pills inside other fruits and taken those to the capital. A case was filed in this connection with Kotwali Police Station.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Israeli jets hit Iranian targets

## Syria, Russia air defences stop most cruise missiles; monitor claims 11 fighters killed

AGENCIES

Israel struck in Syria early yesterday as part of its increasingly open assault on Iran's presence there, shaking the night sky over Damascus with an hour of loud explosions in a second consecutive night of military action.

Damascus did not say what damage or casualties resulted from the strikes, but a war monitor said 11 were killed and Syria's ally Russia said four Syrian soldiers died.

The threat of direct confrontation between arch-enemies Israel and Iran has long simmered in Syria, where the Iranian military built a presence early in the civil war to help President Bashar al-Assad fight Sunni Muslim rebels seeking to oust him.

Israel, regarding Iran as its biggest threat, has repeatedly attacked Iranian targets in Syria and those of allied militia, including Lebanon's Hezbollah without claiming responsibility for the attacks.

But with an election approaching, and with the US vowing more action on Iran, Israel's government has lifted the lid on strikes that it once preferred to keep quiet, and has also taken a tougher stance towards Hezbollah on the border with Lebanon.

It said a rocket attack on Sunday was Iran's work.

In Tehran, air force chief Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh said Iran was "fully ready and impatient to confront the Zionist regime and eliminate it from the earth", according to the Young Journalist Club, a website supervised by state television.

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