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## In the darkness of the shine

INAM AHMED

The BMW SUV makes no jerks even on the potholed Dhaka streets. The silence of the interior, the cool of the air-conditioner and the richness of the woofers streaming Sagan Sen singing Tagore songs drape us with a feeling of assurance.

The dashboard panel shows a fascinating array of instruments—a large LCD screen constantly shows the mileage and a professional navigation system shows maps of cities. At Tejgaon, the roads are cluttered with walking women figures, returning home after their shifts at garment factories. The man behind the steering wheel himself owns several garment factories in Dhaka City. He talks of his next venture in a composite textile mill.

Inside one of these 'garment'

women's 'home', Farida cooks. A 10 feet by 12 feet room that she shares with three other women in the semi-slum area of West Raza Bazar. In one corner some gaudy, cheap clothes dangle from two wooden hangers. Some low-priced ladies shoes with heels line up under the beds, a shelf holds a small mirror, some lipsticks, a Fair and Lovely cream, a Meril powder, hair clips and combs, and a framed photograph taken in a studio where Farida is seen in a sari.

"I want to buy a cassette player soon," she says with a smile.

From the BMW owner to Farida, everybody is pursuing a dream; only that they are branching off fast with a widening gap makes Bangladesh yet another showcase for rich-poor inequality. A quite balanced society some 30 years ago, Bangladesh now ranks as a moderately unbalanced

society where despite growth in GDP, reduction in poverty -- only 0.5 percent a year which is far short of the government's claim of 1 percent -- and advancements in some social indicators -- lowered child mortality rate, higher use of contraceptives, immunisation and narrowing gender gap in schooling, incomes of the rich and poor are increasing disproportionately.

The gini coefficient -- a measurement of income inequality -- clearly shows the deepening rich-poor gap. On a scale of 0-1, the coefficient was 0.259 in 1991-92 and it reached 0.306 in 2000.

This is also evident in the income gap between the rich and the poor. Between 1999 and 2004, the poor's income increased by 4.8 percent, while it increased by 19.4 percent for the non-poor, the preliminary report of the Poverty Monitoring Survey 2004 shows.

Extremism shadows  
Bangladesh  
democracy

US senator says

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar said that Bangladesh's traditional commitment to democracy, religious pluralism, and women's empowerment is now being challenged by extremists who want to establish Islamic rule in the country.

In his opening statement for hearing of nomination of Richard A Boucher, to be assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs, Senator Lugar made the remark in Washington DC on February 16.

While describing the state of

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## CJ decries political leaders' impatience

Says it makes it difficult to strengthen democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Mudassir was speaking as the chief guest at the meeting of stakeholders of the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) at LGRD Bhaban in Agargaon in the capital.

A

meaningful independence of judiciary is sine qua non to secure the promotion and protection of human rights, Justice Mudassir said, adding that outcry for the independent judiciary is as old as the legal system, which is the legacy of colonial rule.

As a democratic state, Bangladesh has committed to the ideals and principles for ensuring an exploitation-free society with

independent judiciary, he added. He urged the national leaders to work for a policy and legislative development of human rights and set an action plan envisaging the process for promotion and protection of human rights.

"I think that establishment of the rule of law is the main prerequisite for any national human rights protection system," the chief justice said.

"We must understand the very definition and implications of the rule of law. It is not merely compilation of some formal rules, rather it underpins some ideal values forming part of our everyday reality."

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Govt must carry out proposed electoral reforms  
Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the main opposition, Sheikh Hasina, yesterday said the government must place a bill in the parliament to implement the opposition's proposed reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission (EC).

"The government must make it clear to the nation whether they will execute our reform proposal or not," Hasina, also the president of Awami League (AL), said while addressing the National Representatives Council of Bangladesh Secondary Teachers' Association in the auditorium of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital.

The AL chief, who placed the reform proposals in the parliament on February 12, said the four-party

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## Baby trade booms at DMCH

SHARIFUL ISLAM AND SHAHEEN MOLLAH

One can easily buy a newborn babe for a few thousand taka, to keep or abuse as one wishes, at no other place than the downtown Dhaka Medical College Hospital and some clinics in its vicinity.

Every month, some two dozen infants change hands at the country's largest public hospital and the so-called clinics, sources said, adding the buyers in most cases are child-less couples.

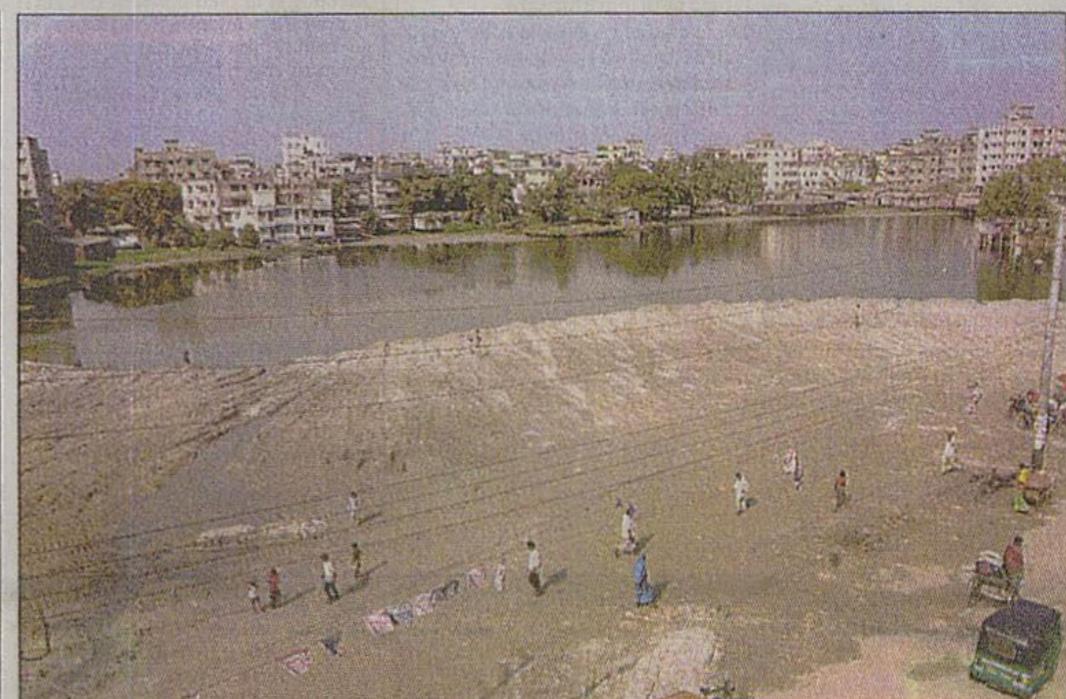
The price range, however, is higher for boys than girls, the sources said. Depending on the identity of the parents, and the baby's look and complexion, the price of a girl child varies between Tk 9,000 and Tk 15,000 while that of a male child between Tk 12,000 and Tk 20,000.

Over a hundred DMCH birth attendants and other employees in collusion with some of

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SLEEP IN FEAR... A mother holds her baby even in sleep at the DMCH yesterday in the wake of abduction of several infants from the hospital.



A large part of Mugdapara Lake in the capital is being filled up with the authorities turning a blind eye to the violation of law.

## Scholastica's rejoinder

In a rejoinder to The Daily Star report published yesterday with the headline 'Addiction grips women more and more', authorities of Scholastica Pvt Limited stated that singling out the name of the institution in the report without any substantiation has tarnished the image of the reputed school.

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## Hope for a cheap ride ends in death

JU CORRESPONDENT

Unable to afford bus fares, the poverty-stricken homebound day labourers and rickshaw-pullers got on a truck so that they could save a few bucks for their families. But the risk they had taken was not worthwhile, as reckless driving robbed

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## BIMAN'S SCHEDULE CHAOS

## Caab grounds plane for inadequate safety

REAZ AHMAD

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) has disallowed Biman Bangladesh Airlines to fly one of its Airbuses because of its non-compliance to safety procedures.

The latest regulatory slap on the craft-crunched national flag carrier came at a time when it has totally failed to maintain its flight schedules due to temporary grounding of four out of its five DC-10s. Biman is also counting a huge loss due to extra spending on food and lodgings for several hundred stranded passengers.

While Biman pinned its hope on

possible resumption of flights by two of its four grounded DC-10s by today, Caab's objection to one of its four Airbuses made things further difficult for it.

Official sources said Caab has disallowed Biman's plea to operate the Airbus due to its failure to comply with an earlier Caab instruction to bring in necessary gadgets and make the craft fool-proof in safety.

The Airbus is now lying idle inside the hanger at Zia International Airport while Biman had to reschedule time and again as many as 17 of its international flights in two days due to craft crisis.

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## 12 killed as truck falls into ditch

## 2 schoolteachers die in another accident

STAR REPORT

At least 12 people were killed and 30 others injured, 13 of them critically, in a road accident on Dhaka-Tangail Highway in Mirzapur in the early hours yesterday.

Meanwhile, two schoolteachers died in another road crash in front of Bhawal Bodre Alam College in Gazipur yesterday, reports A Correspondent in Gazipur.

Police said the first accident occurred when a Gaibandha-bound truck from Dhaka lost control due to dense fog and fell into a ditch at

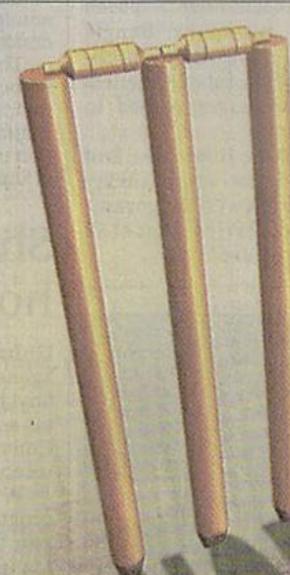
Zamurki around 4:00am, reports Our Tangail Correspondent.

The dead, who were killed on the spot, and the injured were travelling on the cement-laden truck.

Locals and Highway Police rushed to the scene and started rescue operation. They sent the injured to Mirzapur Kumudini Hospital and Mirzapur Upazila Health Complex.

Nine of the dead are Mohammad Abdul Awal, 25, and Bholi Mian, 30, of Gobindaganj in

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## Bangladesh vs. Sri Lanka United We Win Cricket

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