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## TIN HOUSING IN DHAKA

# Highly risky yet in high demand

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

The acrid stench of burnt metal still hangs heavy in the air on the spot where Mohammad Karim's house once stood. It ceased to exist last Thursday, reducing Karim and a thousand others to the role of helpless bystanders as it razed swiftly to the ground, swallowed whole by billowing flames that could well have been hellfire.

Indeed, for Karim and many others, the judgment has been no less harsh.

"I lost everything," says Karim.

Three little words; stark and brutal, but for Karim the consequences of losing everything are just too monumental to comprehend. He keeps repeating those three words almost continually during our brief encounter. It seems he is playing some kind of convoluted psychiatric game of repetition to help him come to terms with the loss of all his worldly possessions.

"I was going to work when I received a call from a friend saying that there was a fire," recalls Karim, who hails from Bogra. The lean young man works for Rajuk, employed as a land measurer in the Purbachal project. "I was in Bishwa Road, when the call came," said Karim. "By the time I reached, there was nothing to do. My home was gone," he says, his eyes lowering to hide the welled up tears.

By any standards, home wasn't much. Nothing more

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One to three storeyed tin-built structures litter Begunbari of Tejgaon in the capital as people with very limited income throng the area because of the cheap rent. Cheap they may be, but they are dangerous too. There have been building collapses and fire incidents over the years. More on page 12.

PHOTO: AnISUR RaHMAN



## Disgraced girl kills herself

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

She could not take it anymore.

Sonia Akhter, a 17-year-old garment worker, lived with her parents at a tin-shed house in the city's Pallabi.

Three months ago, they rented two rooms at Tk 5,000 per month.

Since the family moved in, the landlady had been keeping the electricity shut every day for about 10 hours from the morning.

The woman also snapped water supply to the tenants and asked them to collect water from a reservoir once a day, citing high electricity and water bills.

According to the contract, the owner was supposed to pay the bills.

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## TK 2,686CR LOAN SCAM

## Sonali in a sticky stew

*Recovery effort stalls as mortgaged land of Hall-Mark overvalued; company claims it is now totally off business*

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

The cash-strapped Sonali Bank is not getting back its money from Hall-Mark Group so soon.

To retrieve the money, the quickest way for the state bank is to sell the Hall-Mark assets mortgaged against the loans.

The controversial business group in a letter on Tuesday informed the state-run bank of its inability to return the money in a short time, Tushar Ahmed,

general manager (commercial) of Hall-Mark, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We cannot pay back the loans now as our businesses are totally off," he said on the expiry of Sonali Bank's ultimatum to refund in 15 days half of the Tk 2,686 crore loans Hall-Mark had taken on fake documents.

"We want to repay the loans in long-term instalments," he said.

Hall-Mark paid back more than Tk 400 crore to the bank

after the lender stopped disbursing new loans to the company in May this year, said Tushar, who is also a close relative of the company's owner, Tanvir Mahmud.

According to Hall-Mark, its net liabilities to Sonali Bank now stand at Tk 2,268 crore. Of which, Tk 1,567 crore is funded loan meaning that the amount has been given in cash and the remaining amount is

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## PROTEST AGAINST REFORMS

## Indian PM heckled

AFP, New Delhi

Security men muscled away a protester who heckled Indian Premier Manmohan Singh yesterday as he was about to deliver a speech defending contentious reforms aimed at reviving a flagging economy.

The man, identified by state media as a Supreme Court lawyer, stripped down to his undershirt and trousers, stood on a table and shouted for the prime minister to "roll back" the liberalisation measures at an international legal conference.



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FLIGHT DEBACLE  
400 Biman passengers stranded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 400 passengers of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, mostly bound for Middle-Eastern destinations, were stranded at Dhaka and Chittagong until yesterday as the national carrier's schedule disorder persists.

The backlog of affected Biman flyers might increase to 2,000 passengers till September 25 according to the numbers

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Australia's Cameron White (L) can only gape in wonder as the explosive West Indian Chris Gayle lets fly with yet another big hit during the ICC World Twenty20 Group B match at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. Gayle stormed the Aussie fort with a 33-ball 54 that included four sixes.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Car plunge kills 3 kids

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least three children of a family were killed and five others injured after their microbus plunged into a ditch near Chittagong-Kaptai road in Zia bazar area of the port city yesterday morning.

The deceased --Belal Uddin, 10, Asfaq Uddin, 4, nephews of Mohammad Ali Shah and his niece Humaiz Akter, 8, --died on the spot.

Ali, accompanied by his 11 family members and relatives, left for Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport from Rangunia upazila on the microbus around 5:00am. Injured Ali is an expatriate in Qatar, said his relative Zillur Rahman Habibee.

Tutul Majumder, sub-inspector of Noapara Police Station, said the microbus skidded off the road and fell

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Khaleda leaves for Dinajpur  
Public meeting today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday left the capital for Dinajpur to attend a rally there this afternoon.

The main opposition BNP's local unit is organising the rally as part of

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PrAYER TIMING September 23  
Fajr 4-40 5-15  
Zohr 12-45 1-15  
Asr 4-30 4-45  
Maghrab 6-05 6-10  
Esha 7-30 8-00  
Source: Islamic Foundation

Bismillaher Rahamaner Rahim

**Our heartiest felicitations to His Royal Highness The King & the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques and to the Government & the Brotherly people of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of 82th National Day of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 23 September, 2012.**



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Sattara Centre (15th Floor, Hotel Victory) 30/A, Nayapaltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh  
Phone : 8357030, 9338867, 9338868, Fax : 880-02-9338526  
E-mail : haab01@yahoo.com, Website : www.haab-bd.com

