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# Realtors made housing too expensive

Says land minister, blames developers for offering landowners way too much

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The reckless practices of the real estate business have led to exorbitant land prices in the capital, making housing unaffordable for low-income people, said land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury yesterday.

"It is you, the real estate developers, who should be blamed for turning the landowners greedy by offering abnormal land prices and property shares," Chowdhury said at a seminar on 'Challenges of real estate in urbanisation and decentralisation'.

It was organised by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) at the hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon.

The purchase of huge tracts of land by business conglomerates and the real estate developers offering around 60 percent ownership of the built property, along with signing money to the plot owners, have given rise to abnormal land prices, he said.

The minister asked the realtors how the government could keep land prices stable in such a situation.

"We don't want reckless urbanisation," said Chowdhury, adding, "Change the mindset and develop affordable housing; not only for the wealthy."

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People queue in front of a Trading Corporation of Bangladesh truck selling essentials at subsidised rates. Inset, a seller weighing sugar. The initiative was taken for the convenience of people before Ramadan when the prices of most commodities go up in retail markets. The photos were taken from in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital and Farmgate area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# 13 killed as plane catches fire mid-air

REUTERS, Moscow

At least 13 people on board a Russian Aeroflot passenger plane were killed yesterday when the plane caught fire mid-air and made an emergency landing at a Moscow airport, Russian news agencies reported.

Television footage showed the Sukhoi Superjet-100 making an emergency landing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport with much of the rear part of the plane engulfed in flames.

Many passengers then escaped via the plane's emergency slides that inflated after the hard landing.

Medical workers told the TASS news agency that at least 13 people had been killed and that others remained unaccounted for.

Russian news agencies said the plane, which had been flying from Moscow to the northern Russian city of Murmansk before turning back, had been carrying 78 passengers. It was unclear how many

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# Dodgy arms dealer detained

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

He has been running a licensed firearms shop in Chuadanga for the last nine years but official documents show he has not sold even a single firearm during the period.

In reality, Mirza Bashar Begh, 55, bought at least a hundred legally imported firearms from different arms dealers against his shop "Begh Arms Company" since 2011, and then sold those to criminals, especially in Jashore, Kushtia and Jhenidah, say police.

This came to light after a team of Special Action Group (SAG) of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit arrested Begh and another firearms seller, Abu Zafar Md Rezaul Karim alias Mukul, from the capital's Darussalam on Friday night for selling licensed firearms illegally.

Mejbah Uddin, inspector of the CTTC unit, told this newspaper yesterday that they recovered a .32 bore revolver and 56 bullets from Begh.

Begh bought the firearm and bullets from Mukul, 53, manager of licensed firearms shop "Khaza Arms and Sons" in Bogura, the official mentioned.

Quoting Mukul, another CTTC unit official said Begh Arms Company bought at least 20 firearms in the last five years.

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# Diet deteriorating for 3 decades

Bangladeshis eat unhealthier than they used to in 1990

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Poor diet has become a major concern for Bangladesh as changing dietary patterns show that people are less focused on consuming whole grains, fresh produce and nuts, leading to disease and death.

The number of deaths in the country for poor dietary choices increased in the last three decades, according to a survey published in the Lancet medical journal earlier last month.

In terms of death associated with poor diets, Bangladesh ranked 135 (out of 195 countries and territories) at 344.4 deaths per 100,000 people in 2017, rising from a rank of 34 in 1990.

The research that is part of the Global Burden of Disease study by the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in Seattle, US, showed that almost every region of the world could benefit from rebalancing their diets.

The study, which tracked trends in consumption of 15 dietary factors from 1990 to 2017, estimates that one in five deaths globally -- equivalent to 11 million deaths, even more than smoking tobacco -- is associated with poor diet.

In Bangladesh, a low intake of fruits -- below 250 grams per day -- was the leading dietary risk, the report said.

"Deaths resulting from poor diet in Bangladesh are driven largely by a diet that is low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and high in sodium," Dr Ashkan Afshin, lead author of the study, told The Daily Star in an email.

Afshin, assistant professor of Health Metrics Sciences at the Institute

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# Two killed in 'shootouts'

STAR REPORT

Two alleged criminals -- a drug dealer and a robber -- were killed in so-called shootouts with Border Guard Bangladesh and Rab in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The suspected drug dealer, who was killed in a "gun battle" with BGB members in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila, was identified as Md Abdullah, 24, of the same upazila.

Lt Col Faisal Hasan Khan, commanding officer of BGB-2 Battalion, said a BGB team set up a checkpoint at Khonkarpara on marine drive road on information that drugs were being smuggled in.

As the BGB men signalled a motorcycle to stop around 4:00am, the riders opened fire, forcing them to retaliate. Abdullah was hit by bullets. He was declared dead after being taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex, the BGB official added.

BGB claimed to have

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# Egypt unveils Old Kingdom cemetery



AFP, Cairo

Egypt's antiquities ministry on Saturday unveiled a 4,500-year-old burial ground near the Giza pyramids containing colourful wooden coffins and limestone statues dating back to the Old Kingdom.

The site on the southeastern side of Giza plateau contains tombs and burial shafts from various periods, but the oldest is a limestone family tomb from the fifth dynasty (around 2500 BC), the ministry said.

An AFP photographer who was allowed to access the burial shaft saw inscriptions on the walls, intricately painted wooden sarcophagi and sculptures of animals and humans.

The ministry said the tomb was that of two people: Behnui-Ka, who had seven titles including the Priest and the Judge, and Nwi, also

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# 'Serial rapist' held while trying to flee country

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police arrested an accused in a case filed over raping six minor girls from Jashore's Benapole on Saturday evening.

Aminur Rahman, the accused, was arrested three days after the case was filed against him.

He was nabbed from Gatipara area along the Bangladesh-India border while he was trying to illegally flee the country, police said. He was

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 6

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-15 12-45 5-00 6-34 8-00  
JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-15 6-38 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Woman set ablaze 3 days ago dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A homemaker who was set ablaze in Rangpur on Thursday died of her burns at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The victim's cousin Sohel Rana said 21-year-old Aynunnahar Tonni lost her battle for life around 10:00am while receiving treatment at the hospital.

Zafar Ali Biswas, officer-in-charge of Mithapukur Police Station, said the victim's husband Wahedul Islam, of the district's Mithapukur upazila, has initially been accused of setting her on fire.

A case was filed against Wahedul and police arrested him on the same day the woman was set ablaze, he added.

While receiving treatment at the hospital, the victim, however, told the doctors that she tried to die by suicide following a family feud, Ariful Islam, head of Burn and Plastic Surgery Department at RMCH, told The Daily Star. The victim suffered

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An explosion is pictured among buildings during an Israeli air strike on Gaza City on Saturday night. Gaza militants fired a barrage of rockets at Israel, which responded with airstrikes, officials said, as a fragile ceasefire again faltered.

PHOTO: AFP

# Gaza violence intensifies

5 Palestinians, 3 Israelis killed in retaliatory strikes; UN, Egypt trying to mediate ceasefire

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Rockets from Gaza killed three people in an Israeli city while five Palestinian militants died yesterday in surging cross-border fighting that included a return by Israel to singling out enemy commanders for attack.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he ordered the military to continue "massive strikes" against Gaza's ruling Hamas group and Islamic Jihad, in the most serious border clashes since a spate of fighting in November.

Israel's military said more than 450 rockets, many intercepted by its Iron Dome anti-missile system, have been fired at southern Israeli cities and villages since Friday, and it attacked some 220 targets belonging to Gaza militant groups.

A rocket that hit a house in Ashkelon killed a 58-year-old Israeli man, police said. He was the first such Israeli civilian fatality since the seven-week-long Gaza war in 2014. Separate strikes on the southern Israeli city killed two men, a local hospital official said.

In Gaza, at least four Palestinian gunmen were killed in Israeli strikes, health officials said.

In a separate strike it described as a targeted attack, Israel's military killed Hamed Ahmed Al-Khodary, a Hamas commander. The military said he was responsible for transferring funds from Iran to armed factions in Gaza.

The air strike on his car was the first such killing of a top

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