

Astronauts may inspect shuttle tiles

AP, Cape Canaveral

Nasa managers could decide Sunday whether a piece of fabric filler sticking out from thermal tiles on space shuttle Discovery's belly needs to be plucked out by astronauts during a spacewalk this week.

The gap filler, which is cracked and about an inch long, remains one of the few concerns that needs resolving before mission managers give the green light for Discovery to return to Earth in over a week.

The early consensus is that it probably won't pose problems during the shuttle's re-entry into Earth's atmosphere, but engineers pulled an all-nighter to recommend what, if anything, needs to be done, NASA officials said.

Agency managers already have cleared a slew of areas on the shuttle that raised their interest after viewing images taken during Discovery's flight to the international space station and before the shuttle docked with the orbiting complex.

Markings on the shuttle's nose cap were determined to be harmless bird droppings. Marks on certain panels of the thermal blanket covering Discovery's belly didn't have crushed coating or other signs of damage. Two other gap fillers didn't appear to pose problems.

If necessary, astronauts Piers Sellers and Mike Fossum could try to pluck the gap filler during their third scheduled spacewalk, which is set for Wednesday.

During their first spacewalk, they demonstrated on Saturday that they could make repairs to the shuttle from the end of a 100-foot combination of a robotic arm and boom.

The duo will make their second spacewalk Monday to replace a cable on the space station's rail car.

"You guys proved the arm and boom are stiff enough to use for (spacewalks)," flight controllers wrote Discovery's crew in an electronic morning message, adding that engineers on the ground who work on the shuttle's protective skin "are sleeping easier tonight" because of their spacewalk.

CEC confident

FROM PAGE 1 anybody," he said replying to query on whether the EC's latest decision of going from door to door to update the voter list was made under pressure from any political party.

"We have taken the decision to go from door to door for effective implementation of the court's verdict and to show respect to the whole nation and the people who suggested updating of the voter list through door to door visits," Aziz claimed.

About the ongoing legal controversy over updating of the existing voter list, Aziz said some quarters from the very beginning of the task of preparing a voter list have been creating unnecessary controversies by providing misinterpretations of the laws.

"Some people and a quarter are spreading controversies and creating smoke screens by providing interpretations of the laws according to their wishes," he said defending his steps for updating the voter list.

Echoing the same views, Election Commissioner SM Zakaria said there is no confusion in the EC over updating the existing voter list. "The court directed to correct, amend and include names on the existing voter list. We are taking steps in accordance with the court's verdict and electoral laws," he claimed adding "but some people are spreading confusions unjustly."

"The existing laws have a provision for revising the existing voter list, but the court did not direct to revise the voter list. It instructed for corrections, amendments and inclusions of names on the existing voter list," Zakaria claimed.

Replies to a query about whether there was a necessity for amending the rules to make way for door to door visits, the CEC claimed it was necessary. "It was not possible to make door to door visits unless the rule was amended. People, who have interpreted that the amendment is unnecessary, are not correct. They are misinterpreting the laws," he said.

About the opinions of legal experts who have termed the EC's method of updating the voter list as wrong, Aziz said "They do not need to pay tax on words!"

In a written statement, Aziz described the procedure for updating the existing voter list.

US envoy

FROM PAGE 16 No one has security while the godfathers of the political killings remain unidentified and beyond the reach of justice, Reza said, adding, "Fair election is not also possible so if there is dominance of guns and money and if the kingpins of the serial killings are not punished."

Embankment washed away as Dharla bursts its banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

About one kilometre area of the 1.5km Dharla river flood control embankment was washed away at Charborai point in Sadar upazila of Kurigram district in last two days.

Some 1,450 families were marooned as 10 villages including Laxmikanta, Charborai, Jogmohol Char and Kalmorai were flooded. Fifty families lost their homesteads due to the river erosion, locals said.

The floodwater also washed away a protection cover built to shield the 1.5km embankment that was built this year under a special project for town protection, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) sources said.

"We had taken all preventive measures to save the embankment but failed due to abnormal flow in the river," a BWDB official said.

Dharla river was flowing only 24 centimetres below the danger level yesterday morning.

The gap filler that concerns managers is just above an area on the shuttle's belly that is connected to the external tank during launch. Gap filler is material fitted between thermal tiles to prevent them from rubbing against each other.

Discovery had a similar piece of fabric sticking out in the same place during last year's flight of the shuttle, the first since the Columbia disaster in 2003. Two pieces of gap filler had to be removed from Discovery's belly during a spacewalk last year because of concerns they would cause problems during re-entry.

Police Station Kamrul Islam were injured in the attack.

The unruly workers then took control of around four-kilometre of highway from Borobor to Maleker Bari. The incident left stranded vehicles in gridlocks.

The workers also prevented fire engines from extinguishing the vehicles in flames. They hurled bricks at the fire engines which also hit Deputy Assistant Director of Fire Service Shahidur Rahman.

Police around 9:30am fired eight gunshots into the air and lobbed 15 teargas shells to disperse the mob.

Vehicular movement on the highway was restored around 11:00am after police were reinforced by the deployment of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), riot police.

Meanwhile, the workers of the attacked factories held three men - Shafiqul Alam, 24, Monir Hossain, 22, and Iqbal, 23, -- and handed them over to police for their alleged involvement in vandalism.

Press Secretary to the President Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury said the president signed a number of government files and a message on the World Population Day and diplomatic documents.

AFM Solaiman Chowdhury, secretary to the president, and Mokhlesur welcomed the president back to his office with bouquets.

High military and civil officials of Bangabhaban were also present on the occasion.

The press secretary to the president said in line with the doctor's advice the president has to take adequate rest and medication and the number of visitors is limited.

Senior officials of the presidential office, family members of the president and people who are involved with his treatment are in the list of visitors in the coming days, he added.

He requested other intending visitors to wait until the president fully recovered.

The 75-year-old head of state attended his office last on May 23, the day when he fell sick and was admitted to Dhaka Combined Military Hospital (CMH). He was flown to Singapore the following

day and he returned home on June 20 after a bypass at Mount Elizabeth Hospital there.

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