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"I have always said humanitarian aid or action is not the only solution. I think it's very important to have a political solution."

"The commission does not have anything to do if people are not interested in taking part in the election."

"We encourage India and Pakistan to exercise restraint, and avoid escalation at any"

Tension spirals

Islamabad, New Delhi claim downing each other's warplanes; Indian pilot held; Pak PM warns against war, offers talks; world powers renew call to defuse Kashmir tensions

India and Pakistan both said they shot down each other's fighter jets yesterday, with Pakistan capturing an Indian pilot a day after Indian warplanes struck inside Pakistan for the first time since 1971, prompting world powers to urge restraint.

Calling for talks with India to defuse the situation, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan warned of the potentially catastrophic consequences should "better sense" not prevail.

"Can we afford any miscalculation with the kind of weapons that we have and you have? If this escalates, things will no longer be in my control or in Modi's," he said in a televised statement referring to the Indian prime minister.

While both sides have sought to play down the threat of war, the rare aerial engagement over the divided and disputed territory of Kashmir significantly raises the stakes in a standoff sparked by a suicide attack on the Indian-controlled side earlier this month.

Pakistan initially said it downed two Indian jets in its airspace and captured two pilots, but later its military spokesman tweeted that there was "only one pilot" in Pakistani custody.

India's foreign ministry demanded the "immediate and safe return" of the pilot, calling on Pakistan to ensure no harm comes to him.

New Delhi confirmed the loss of one of its planes and said it had shot down a Pakistani fighter jet.

In a sign of the deepening crisis, Pakistan closed its airspace "until further notice". India shut several airports in the northern part of the country temporarily, leading to dozens of domestic flight cancellations. Operations at the Indian airports have now resumed.

"We do not want to go towards war," Pakistan's military spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor told a press conference.



People stand next to the wreckage of Indian Air Force's helicopter after it crashed in Budgam district in Kashmir yesterday. Below, stranded passengers queue at airline counters following the shutdown of the airspace for commercial flights north of Delhi as tensions increase with Pakistan, at Jammu airport in Jammu yesterday. Pakistan said it shot down two Indian warplanes in its airspace over disputed Kashmir, in a dramatic escalation of a confrontation that has ignited fears of an all-out conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

What's at stake as Indo-Pak tensions rise?

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan and India said yesterday they had shot down each other's warplanes, in a dramatically escalating confrontation that has fuelled concerns of an all-out conflict between the nuclear-armed rivals. But how did the relations between these two Asian nations become so bad and what's at stake in this rapidly worsening conflict that both sides say they want to deescalate?

WHAT STARTED THIS LATEST TENSION?

On February 14, a suicide car bomber attacked a paramilitary convoy on the Indian-controlled side of Kashmir in the Himalayas, killing more than 40 troops. The militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, which is based in Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. The suicide bomber was from Indian Kashmir. New Delhi long has accused Pakistan of cultivating such groups, something denied by Islamabad. India launched



City to have digital traffic management system: PM

The government is going to introduce a digital system to improve the capital's traffic management, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament yesterday.

Replying to a question from Jatiya Party MP Mujib-ul-Haque Chunnun, Hasina said adopting a digital technology would make traffic management easier.

In response to another question from

A rare lack of festivity

DNCC goes to polls today, but voters show little enthusiasm; many say they won't vote

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-election takes place today but it lacks enthusiasm and festivity.

Many city dwellers said they did not even know whether they were among the voters. Others said they would not go to the polling centres as the election was likely to be one-sided.

"As you can see, there is no poster of any mayor candidates. None of them came to our area to seek vote either. I don't know who are running for the [mayor] post," Mohammad Faruk, a grocer in Mohammadpur, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Zahed Mia, a rickshaw puller living in Badda, said there was hardly any electioneering in his area as well. "It does not look like an election," he said.

Many in other DNCC areas echoed their remarks, adding that they had no idea where their polling centres were.

The mayor by-polls lost its appeal after some major political parties, including the BNP, boycotted it, claiming that a

Relocation begins in 15 days

4,000 chemical units to be shifted from old town

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The industries ministry will start relocating nearly 4,000 chemical warehouses and factories from Old Dhaka within the next 15 days as it selected two temporary sites in the capital and Tongi for this purpose.

The decision came at a meeting between the industries secretary and acid and chemical traders at the former's city office yesterday, a week after the fatal Chawkbazar blaze which killed 69 people and injured many others.

Different quarters have been critical of the delay in the relocation as nine years have passed since the Nimtoli tragedy in 2010, which had claimed 124 lives. The government at that time had instructed shifting the warehouses.

Kazi Mashiur Rahman, ex-MD and CEO of the Mercantile Bank Ltd, uploaded this post on his Facebook page to share what he saw, experienced and perceived in Sunday's attempted 'plane hijack' drama among his friends and families. This is the first eyewitness account available since the incident. He witnessed it all up-close, sitting on the front row. The Daily Star last night talked to Mashiur, now in Dubai, and sought his permission to run his unedited account as it may give readers an idea about what actually happened inside the Bangladesh Biman plane.

A journey by plane that I will never forget

On February 23, 2019, I officially turned 65. According to the rules of Bangladesh Bank, it was time to say goodbye to my career as a professional banker. My friends, family and colleagues congratulated me on a job well done, and encouraged me to look forward to some well-deserved rest and relaxation. Little did I know that the first day of my retirement would turn out to be one of the most harrowing days of my entire life.

Biman plane was hit by two bullets

Says aviation secretary

SHARIFUL ISLAM and RASHIDUL HASAN

The Boeing 737-800 Biman aircraft, which Polish Ahmed reportedly tried to hijack on Sunday, will resume operations within eight to ten days, Civil Aviation Secretary Mohibul Haque said yesterday.

He said the aircraft was hit by two bullets and a switchboard was damaged during the incident.

"It is very likely that the plane will be flown to Dhaka by tomorrow [today] for replacing the switchboard. The spare board has been brought from Boeing," he told The Daily Star.

He added the damages were minimal.

Meanwhile, Chattogram

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Green pacers on green-top

SPORTS REPORTER

The first match of Bangladesh's three-match Test series against hosts New Zealand will begin today at the Seddon Park in Hamilton -- on a green-top that could see pacers dominate terms although the pitch is said to have something for both batsmen and bowlers.

Bangladesh failed miserably in the preceding three-match ODI series, being whitewashed in their favoured format. While the batsmen's failures, especially the top-order debacle, were mainly scrutinised for the outcome, the bowlers were also far from an acceptable standard.

It remains to be seen if an inexperienced pace unit -- which may be without Mustafizur Rahman as Bangladesh bowling coach

আল-আরাফাহ ইসলামী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর চেয়ারম্যান আলহাজ্জ আব্দুস সামাদ লাবু বাংলাদেশ অ্যাসোসিয়েশন অব ব্যাংকস (বিএবি)'র ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান নির্বাচিত হওয়ায় অভিনন্দন

আল-আরাফাহ ইসলামী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড পরিচালক পর্ষদের চেয়ারম্যান আলহাজ্জ আব্দুস সামাদ লাবু বাংলাদেশ অ্যাসোসিয়েশন অব ব্যাংকস (বিএবি) এর ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান নির্বাচিত হওয়ায় আল-আরাফাহ ইসলামী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড পরিবারের পক্ষ থেকে জানাই আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন।

আলহাজ্জ আব্দুস সামাদ লাবু আল-আরাফাহ ইসলামী ব্যাংকের একজন উদ্যোক্তা পরিচালক। তিনি দেশের অন্যতম বৃহৎ শিল্পগোষ্ঠী এস আলম গ্রুপের ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান এবং এস আলম কোল্ড রোল্ড স্টিলস লিঃ এর চেয়ারম্যান। জনাব আব্দুস সামাদ লাবু নর্দার্ন জেনারেল ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোম্পানি লিঃ এবং রিলায়েন্স ফাইন্যান্স ইনভেস্টমেন্ট লিঃ -এর উদ্যোক্তা পরিচালক। তিনি স্যাটেলাইট টেলিভিশন চ্যানেল একুশে টেলিভিশন (ইটিভি)'র ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান।

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