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HAOR PROTECTION EMBANKMENTS

Repair work far behind schedule

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN and DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Farmers in the northeastern backswamps are on the brink of facing another flash flood as the construction and maintenance works of "around 50 percent" Haor protection embankments have not been completed within the given timeline.

Following the devastating flash flood of 2017, the government decided to form project implementation committees (PICs) -- each comprised of five to seven members -- every year to build and maintain the banks, replacing the previous contractors over corruption allegation.

But as of February 23, only 50 percent of the PICs were formed while the deadline for completing all the construction works was February 28.

The information was revealed yesterday in a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity jointly organised by Oxfam and People's Oriented Program Implementation (Popi), a local development NGO.

Speakers also alleged that the people who were sued earlier on charges of corruption were included in many PICs.

"Problems are numerous. Incomplete dams, lack of sustainability of the existing ones and corruption of the PICs are the major concerns," said Murshed Alam Sarker, executive director of Popi.

Mehbuba Yeasmin, influencing officer at Oxfam in Dhaka, told The Daily Star, "We found many embankments

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Hafsa and her 28-day-old daughter Meem have been living under a marquee, inset, set up for some of the people made homeless in Thursday night's fire at Bhashantek slum in the capital. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

2 projectiles found in that Biman plane

Investigators say; collect pilot's conversation with the tower

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Chattogram

Investigators have seized two projectiles from the Boeing 737-800 Biman aircraft, which Polash Ahmed reportedly tried to hijack on February 24 at Chattogram Shah Amanat International Airport.

The investigators have also collected the conversation between the pilot and the control tower of the airport in written form, said police and airport sources.

Earlier, Civil Aviation Secretary Md Mohibul Haque said the aircraft was hit by two bullets and a switchboard was damaged during the shooting.

Confirming the incident, Inspector Rajesh Barua of Counter Terrorism unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), also the investigation officer of the case, told The Daily Star, "The aviation engineer of Biman Bangladesh handed over two projectiles to us

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Ducsu polls campaign kicks off

DU CORRESPONDENT

Campaign for the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) and hall union polls officially began yesterday as the university authorities published the final list of candidates.

According to section 4 (Kha) of the electoral code of conduct, one can conduct campaigning from the day of announcing the final list of candidates and continue it 24 hours prior to the election.

The authorities have published the final list of candidates in the website (<http://ducsu.du.ac.bd>) which shows that 21 candidates are contesting for the vice-president post and 14 others for the general secretary post.

Besides, 13 candidates will run for the assistant general secretary post, 11

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Spending on metro must be justified

Says ADB official; pre-feasibility study on 17km southern metro line-5 for Dhaka finalised

TAWFIQUE ALI

The money spent on an expensive project like metro rail must be justified by ensuring it provides quality and optimum service to the public, said the country director of Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"The money taken from an international lending organisation to implement a scheme like metro rail is a loan and you have to repay it with taxpayers' money," said ADB Country Director Manmohan Prakash on Wednesday.

"So, you must mind that it is ultimately public money [which is being] spent for the metro rail," he said, adding that the metro rail scheme must be focused on how efficiently common and poor people at the bottom echelon can be brought into mainstream economic activities.

The rationale of metro rail also depends on appropriate transport planning and timely completion, Prakash said at the presentation of the pre-feasibility final

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\$45m more US aid for Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US is giving \$45.5 million more aid for the Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh after facing a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine in August 2017.

"Today the United States is contributing \$45.5 million to the UN World Food Programme in support of the Rohingya refugee crisis," Earl Robert Miller, US ambassador to Bangladesh, announced yesterday as he called on all nations with the means to contribute to this global humanitarian crisis.

This is in addition to the \$60 million announced at the 2019 UN Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis held in Geneva on February 15, Miller told reporters.

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Dragon capsule docks on ISS



AFP, Washington

SpaceX's new Dragon capsule successfully docked on the International Space Station (ISS) yesterday, Nasa and SpaceX confirmed during a live broadcast of the mission.

"We can confirm hard capture is complete," Nasa said.

The announcement was met with applause at the Johnson Space Centre in Houston, Texas.

The docking began at 1051 GMT, more than 248 miles (400 kilometres) above the Earth's surface, north of New Zealand -- and 27 hours after the capsule's launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral in Florida.

Although the contact appeared slow, the ISS

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

RAMPAL POWER PLANT 2 workers killed as container falls on them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Two labourers of Rampal thermal power plant in Bagerhat have been killed and one sustained critical injuries as an iron-made container fell on them.

The dead are Naib Ali, 45, and Firoz, 49, and the injured is Sohanur, 24.

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 4

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30

JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A recovery vehicle of Dhaka Metropolitan Police removing a motorcycle from North Brooks in the capital yesterday as the rider allegedly failed to produce its registration.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka returns 'lost' Myanmar soldier

AFP, Cox's Bazar

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday handed back a Myanmar soldier more than two months after he strayed across the border into a jungle in the Muslim-majority nation, a senior official said.

Aung Bo Bo Thein, 30, was detained by security forces on January 24 near the southern town of Naikhongchhari, Brigadier General Sajedur Rahman told AFP.

"He crossed the border and was found in a jungle. Today we have handed him over to Myanmar border police through a flag meeting," said Rahman, regional commander of BGB.

Ties between Bangladesh and Myanmar have soured since about 740,000 Rohingya Muslims fled the Buddhist-majority country in 2017 following a military clampdown in restive Rakhine state.

Dhaka had already been hosting another 300,000 Rohingya who took refuge

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

India, Pakistan border quiet

Kashmir tense as crackdown on militancy continues; US to probe misuse of F-16 jets by Islamabad

REUTERS, Srinagar

As India and Pakistan seemingly dial down hostilities that brought the arch enemies to the brink of another war, a massive crackdown on militancy in the Indian-controlled Kashmir region is killing both militants and security personnel in big numbers.

At the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border between the nuclear-armed neighbours, there was relative calm in the past 24 hours, their armies said yesterday. The exchange of fire in the past few days has killed seven people on the Pakistani side and four on the Indian side, though the release of a downed Indian fighter pilot by Pakistan on Friday night has helped de-escalate tensions.

"By and large the LoC was calm last night but you never know when it will become active again," said Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, a minister in Pakistani Kashmir. "Tension still prevails."

A top Indian minister said on Saturday night the government would not share proof that "a very large number" of militants were killed in air strikes inside Pakistan this week, after doubts were raised there were any casualties in the attack.

Indian warplanes carried out air strikes on Tuesday inside northeast Pakistan's Balakot on what New Delhi called militant camps. Islamabad denied any such camps existed, as did some villagers in the area when Reuters visited.

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