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FLOOD IN HAOR  
Time to focus  
on long-term  
solutions  
Say experts

DWOHA CHOWDHURY,  
Sylhet

Farmers of Sunamganj, Kishoreganj, Netrakona and Sylhet grow Boro on around 4 lakh hectares every year, but the government has been spending money on the vital levees that protect them on a piecemeal basis. They produce paddy worth over Tk 7,500 crore yearly and the government this year has spent just Tk 159 crore on the levees that save their fields from flash floods. Experts and activists for years have been saying that it is high time to focus on long-term solutions like river dredging as short-term solutions like constructing levees is not working due to their poor quality. Zaheed Farooque, state minister for water resources, at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday said a project

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Idris Ali, a farmer of Uptar Haor in Sylhet, shows paddy that went bad due to flash floods. Over 7,000 hectares of Boro crops have been submerged in floodwaters so far this year, causing a loss to the tune of around Tk125 crore. Haors have been suffering the most and farmers there are not being able to harvest any paddy.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Biman plane  
tugged into  
another

Both aircraft out of  
service with damage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dubai bound flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines was forced to reschedule on Sunday after the aircraft hit the tail of another when entering the hangar after completing regular maintenance. Both the aircraft – Boeing 737-800 and Boeing 777-300ER – were left with scratches after the collision on Sunday at the Dhaka airport and are now out of commission. This is the third such incident in two months, raising questions about the national flag carrier's fleet maintenance. The accidents are due to carelessness, aviation experts said. On February 15, a Boeing 737 aircraft of Biman was brought back from Malaysia after a windshield crack was noticed mid-air en route to Kuala Lumpur. On March 6, another Boeing was damaged when a bird hit an engine of the plane during landing at Sylhet MAG Osmani International Airport. With the recent accident, as many as four aircraft out of a fleet of 21 are grounded – a development that will leave Biman's flight schedule in disorder, according to the airline's officials. For instance, the Dubai flight had to be

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Outrage over  
torture of  
schoolboy

Video of the incident goes viral

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Video footage of a child being tied to a pole and tortured by a shopkeeper has shocked many in Chuadanga town. In the clip that went viral on Facebook, Ali Ahmed is seen hitting the boy in school uniform with a stick. Ahmed later told reporters that he thought the boy had stolen Tk 5 from his shop in the Dost area. He left the 5th grader of Dost Government Primary School tied to the pole for nearly three hours in scorching heat until the head teacher of his school, Momin Hossain, came to rescue him. The boy told this correspondent that he went to the shop on lunch break to buy some snacks. But he didn't like the ones at the shop and was about to leave when Ahmed's 13-year-old daughter accused him of stealing Tk 5 from their shop. Within moments, several other shopkeepers tied him to a pole, he added. Ahmed came to the shop a little later and started slapping him and hitting him with a stick. The boy said he went to the shop with a coin of Tk 5 which was his pocket money. But the shopkeepers insisted that he had stolen it. Hearing the news from locals, head teacher Momin rushed to the spot and rescued the boy. Contacted, shopkeeper Ahmed said the torture was justified. AHM Lutful Kabir, officer-in-charge of Darshana Police Station, said legal action will be taken if someone presses charges.

SRI LANKA ECONOMIC CRISIS  
3 parties seek interim  
govt with new PM

REUTERS, Colombo

Three political parties that recently withdrew from Sri Lanka's ruling coalition have proposed forming an interim government with a new prime minister replacing President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's older brother, they said yesterday. Facing an economic crisis and dragged down by debt, the island nation of 22 million people is running short of power, fuel, food and medicines due to a lack of foreign exchange for imports. It has reached out to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and countries such as India and China for urgent financial help. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa called for patience and announced the reinstatement of a critical fertiliser subsidy for farmers. "The president and I are spending every moment to formulate solutions on how to get Sri Lanka out of this current crisis," he said in a televised address, as protesters camped outside the president's office for

the third consecutive day. President Rajapaksa dissolved his cabinet last week and called for a unity government to help tackle the crisis, as 41 lawmakers walked out of the ruling coalition to become independents in the 225-seat parliament. The government has said it retains a majority in the house.

**Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa called for patience and announced the reinstatement of a critical fertiliser subsidy for farmers.**

Three parties represented by 16 of the lawmakers told reporters that they had met the president and the prime minister and that more talks were scheduled for today. "The main proposal is to have an all-party committee to make key decisions and the appointment of a new prime minister and a limited Cabinet," said Udaya Gammanpila, chief of

the Jathika Hela Urumaya party. "We want this before a new election. We have to reverse shortages and stabilise the economy." Sri Lanka's next parliamentary election is not due until 2025. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), with 14 lawmakers, said the independents would speak with other political parties to come to a consensus, as the government prepares to hold loan discussions with the IMF next week. "Talks with the IMF will need a stable government capable of implementing clear policies," SLFP General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekera said. "This is necessary to repair the economy and bring relief to the people." In his address, the prime minister said the government would reintroduce a critical fertiliser subsidy to assist farmers who have been hit by crop losses after a ban on chemical fertilisers last year. Sri Lankans, holding street demonstrations for more than a month, have focused their anger on the Rajapaksa dynasty.

Scientists reverse  
ageing in human  
cells by 30yrs

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Researchers have reversed ageing in human skin cells by 30 years, according to a new study. Scientists say they have developed a method to time jump human skin cells by three decades – longer than previous reprogramming methods, rewinding the ageing clock without the cells losing their function. Researchers describe being able to partly restore the function of older cells, as well as renew the biological age. According to the study, in experiments that simulated a skin wound, the partially rejuvenated cells showed signs of behaving more like youthful cells. Experts suggest that, while in their early stages, the findings could eventually revolutionise regenerative medicine, especially if it can be replicated in other cell types. Professor Wolf Reik, a group leader in the Epigenetics research programme who has recently moved to lead the Altos Labs Cambridge Institute, said: "This work has very exciting implications. "Eventually, we may be able to identify genes that rejuvenate without reprogramming, and



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RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR  
Energy, commodity  
prices may rise in Asia  
Experts say at ANN webinar co-presented by  
Star, Philippine Daily Inquirer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Escalating global geopolitical tensions arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine could spill over to Asia through sharper-than-expected increases in energy and other commodity prices, said experts yesterday. "There are several risk factors that really cloud the horizon despite our overall somewhat optimistic take on Asia's economy going forward," said Albert Park, chief economist of the Asian Development Bank, in a webinar hosted by the Asia News Network (ANN). The Daily Star and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, both members of ANN, an alliance of 20 national media in 19 Asian countries, co-presented the webinar on the "impacts of food and energy crises on Asia" due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was the second of a series of webinars

hosted by ANN on the Ukraine crisis. In his presentation styled "Managing Asia's Economies during Troubling Times", Park said "aggressive tightening" by the US could trigger financial market volatility, capital outflows and currency depreciation, raising financial stability risks in the region. The emergence of more deadly Covid-19 variants and China's current Omicron outbreak could jeopardise regional growth and supply chains. Besides, scarring effects of learning losses from continued school closures and high youth unemployment rates could affect future productivity, he added. Park, however, stressed that Asian countries need to continue investing in digitalisation, green energy and human capital to support sustained growth despite all other challenges that they are facing.

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Locals help in rescue operations after a train hit an easy-bike on an unmanned level crossing in Hatia of Tangail's Kalihati upazila yesterday. Three members of a family, including a woman and her 14-month old son, who were passengers of the three-wheeler, were killed in the accident.

PHOTO: STAR