

EC for fixing ceiling on party donation

Proposes to fix maximum Tk 5 lakh for individual, Tk 25 lakh for institution, company

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) is looking to put a ceiling on donations to the registered political parties to bring transparency in finances of the organisations.

According to its draft proposals for electoral reforms, no individual will be allowed to contribute more than Tk 5 lakh in cash or assets or service to a single registered political party while the amount will be no more than Tk 25 lakh for a contributing institution or a business entity.

The commission, however, did not specify any time for the sums to

be donated by individuals or companies.

The donations to the political parties will be exempted from taxes if those who will give the money are taxpayers.

"But no registered political party shall receive any donation or funds from a foreign country, or individuals who are not of Bangladesh origin, or organisations that are locally registered but receive foreign funds," say the draft proposals.

At present, the political parties can collect funds from any sources and allegations against them of abusing the opportunity are rife,

the EC said explaining the rationale for the move.

In current political culture, businessmen and companies reportedly commit huge sums of money to the country's main political parties on condition that the recipients, if voted to power, would do them a good turn.

There is little transparency in collection and expenditure of funds. Even most of the party leaders do not know about the financial matters that are usually controlled by a chosen few.

Ahead of the cancelled ninth parliamentary election, the major

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TAX OFFENCES

Ex-NBR member Sarwar gets 8yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An anti-graft court yesterday sentenced former National Board of Revenue member ATM Sarwar Hossain to eight years' imprisonment in the first ever case against an NBR member in connection with tax offences.

Meanwhile, judgement in the graft case against detained ex-BNP lawmaker Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, his wife and two sons, supposed to be given yesterday, will now be given on September 30.

The judgement could not be delivered yesterday as Judge Ashraf Hossain of the Fifth Special Court felt sick.

Sarwar, who is absconding, was sentenced for committing two offences under two different sections of the Income Tax Ordinance

of 1984.

Judge Amar Kumar Roy of the Second Special Court at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar MP Hostel also fined Sarwar Tk 1.20 lakh, in default he would have to serve jail term for six more months.

The court also ordered confiscation of Sarwar's properties and wealth worth Tk 4,31,90,106 about which he concealed information in his tax returns for different tax years.

"None is above the law. Sarwar committed the offence when he was an NBR member and was aware of rules and laws. This is the first ever case against an NBR member and the judgement given is also the first," said Syed Shamim Ahsan Habib, public prosecutor.

The former NBR member was

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SALE OF 18 RAJUK HOUSES

Graft charges against Abbas, Amir Khasru

23 others including Harris Chy also on the list

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against two former ministers and 23 others of causing a Tk 127.64 crore loss to the exchequer by selling 18 abandoned government houses at lower prices.

ACC Assistant Director Khairul Huda submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka against detained former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas, former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, ex-political secretary to the prime minister Harris Chowdhury, three

ex-secretaries and a number of high officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and Power Development Board (PWD), among others.

The anti-graft body filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on March 29.

The other accused are Rajuk's Chief Engineer Reazul Manir, Secretary Mir Mosharraf Hossain, former directors Humayun Khan and Golam Nabi, former member and present Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Shahid Alam, and officials Emdadul Hossain and Mohammad Ali.

Former PWD engineer Syed Mahfuz Ahmed, former housing

and public works secretary SM Jafrullah, PWD official Ziauddin Ahmed and Director of Purbachal Project Abdus Sadeque are among those accused.

The rest are former lawmaker Kazi Anwar Hossain, former housing and public works secretary Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury, Managing Director of Cocola Foods Company Ltd Shukkur Miah, Chairman of Advanced Development Technologies Ltd SM Anwar Hossain, Chairman of M/S MN Company Limited Niu ze Mendes, proprietor of Electro Mart Company Limited Nurul Sofat, Chairman of Matco Company

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UNACCEPTABLE CARTOON

Editors urge Ulema to consider Prothom Alo's apology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors of different newspapers yesterday jointly urged the country's Aleem community to consider Prothom Alo's apology and the actions the government and the daily have taken following publication of an unacceptable cartoon in the daily's satire magazine Aalpin.

In a joint statement they also urged everyone to exercise restraint and show sense of responsibility.

The country's Muslims have been venting their grievances since the publication of the cartoon that hurt their religious sentiment.

Gulam Sarwar, editor of the daily Jugantor, read out the statement to journalists at the secretariat after a meeting with Information Adviser Mainul

Hosain.

The statement said, "The publication of the cartoon feature was an unfortunate event. Naturally it hurt the pious Muslim community."

It said the Prothom Alo authorities have already apologised for the inadvertent publication of the cartoon feature and withdrawn it immediately. They also dismissed an Aalpin sub-editor and announced that they will no longer publish any write-up or cartoon of the contributor cartoonist concerned.

The government has also taken action regarding the incident. Law enforcers have arrested cartoonist Arifur Rahman and seized all copies of the Aalpin's 431st issue containing the cartoon.

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Khatib asks all not to incite tension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Khatib Maulana Obaidul Haq yesterday urged people not to incite tension or movement in the country centring the cartoon published in daily Prothom Alo's weekly Aalpin since the daily's

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Aalpin publication suspended

UNB, Dhaka

The Dhaka District Magistrate yesterday ordered the publisher of daily Prothom Alo to suspend publication of its supplement "Aalpin" until the cartoon matter is settled.

The magistrate also asked the Prothom Alo publisher to explain within two weeks why the publication of "Aalpin" should not be

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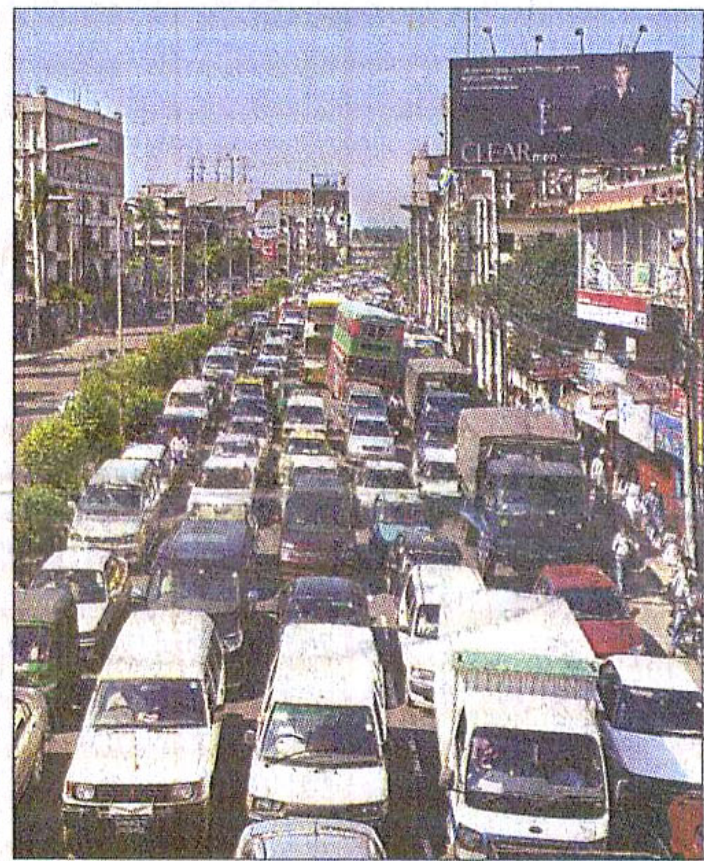


PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of vehicles stuck in a gridlock at Farmgate on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital. The photo was taken around 1:45pm yesterday.

Tailback stops city in its tracks

SHAMIM ASHRAF

As if they don't have an end: long queues of traffic stretching over all the city streets, totally clogging the thoroughfares. In several rows vehicles are glued with one another with hardly any space between them, as if being formed into wreaths.

"Only God knows when I would reach Gulistan," Gazipur grocer Shafiqul Islam sitting in a passenger bus on his way to see his ailing mother in Narayanganj, said while stuck in gridlock jam at Karwan Bazar.

It was 11:15am, and Shafiqul said it took him 55 minutes to reach Karwan Bazar from Banani, distance that should take hardly 15

minutes.

Like him, scores others would say traffic congestion has reached a new height.

In a situation like this, the commuters not only have to spend hours in traffic jam but also have to pay more in fare.

"What can we do? Since we have to remain stuck in jam for hours, we can't take as many passengers as we did earlier," said Nazimuddin, a CNG-run three-wheeler driver.

Special measures taken to ease congestion during the holy month of Ramadan have failed, causing intolerable sufferings to commuters almost the whole day, with respite just before the iftar.

Has city traffic system totally

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

Court declines to hear Khaleda's bail appeal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday declined to hear the bail petition of detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia, saying the court has no jurisdiction to pass any judgment on an appeal for bail in a graft case.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq at Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court made the observation that follows a September 12 ruling in which Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Jalal Ahmed also declined to hear Khaleda's bail petition citing the same reason.

The defence lawyers in their bail petition said the government had filed the case against Khaleda, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 11 other people under sections 409/109 of Bangladesh Penal Code and section 5(2) of Prevention of Corruption Act.

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ACC okays bringing Hasina's Tk 3cr graft case under EPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has approved bringing the Tk 3 crore graft case filed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others under the emergency power rules (EPR).

The commission on Wednesday permitted bringing the case under EPR and the case will be non-bailable," ACC Secretary Muklesur Rahman told journalists at a briefing at the ACC head office yesterday.

The case is brought under section 15/19 (j) of EPR, 2007 following a petition by the investigation officer (IO) of the case ACC Deputy Director Morshed Alam.

"As the case involves public interest and financial loss of the country, it is brought under EPR in the interest of the investigation,"

the ACC secretary said explaining the commission's move.

The home ministry and the court would now decide by which period the case would be disposed of and the punishment to be dealt, Muklesur Rahman added.

ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan lodged the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2, complaining that Hasina and the six others used their influence to help Wartsila Power Development Ltd Consortium and its local partners -- Summit Group and United Group -- win a deal for setting up 100MW barge-mount power plants in Haripur, Khulna and Shikabaha, depriving the lowest bidder.

The case statement said that Hasina, the then prime minister, received kickbacks of Tk 3 crore

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Saptahik 2000 withdraws its Sept 21 issue, apologises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saptahik 2000, a weekly Bangla magazine, withdrew all copies of its current issue (Eid issue/September 21, 2007) from the market.

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BRAC Staff Afghanistan closing in on abductors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Afghan authorities are closing in on the abductors of Brac worker Nurul Islam and they are hopeful of his release soon, said Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury quoting the

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The Daily Star

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