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AL, JSD for not registering religion-based parties with EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Religion-based political parties are not supposed to be eligible to register with the Election Commission (EC), according to the draft proposal of the EC, said Awami League (AL) and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) yesterday. According to the commission's draft proposal, religion-based political parties cannot be registered with the Election Commission, said AL president member Tofail Ahmed after a meeting between the AL and JSD -- two allies of the AL-led 14-party coalition -- at AL Acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence in the capital.

Reading out a clause from the EC draft proposal, Tofail said a political party will be disqualified for registration if there is any

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Court accepts extortion charge against Minu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday accepted charge sheet against City Mayor and former BNP lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Minu and three others in the Tk 1 crore extortion case.

The other accused are Lutfar Rahman, district BNP vice-president and former president of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (RCCI), and his brothers Fazlur Rahman and Bazlur Rahman.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Rajshahi also relieved three people from the case.

They are Kundu Babu, Lutfar's personal aide, Jahir Uddin, Lutfar's manager, and Mosharraf Hossain, his business partner.

The court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate M Afzal Hossain issued warrants of arrest against Lutfar's brothers and asked police to serve

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Judgment in Lobi's tax evasion case on Oct 7

UNB, Dhaka

The judgement in a graft case against former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi and his wife Khusnud Asgar Lobi will be delivered on October 7.

After closing arguments by both the prosecution and defence lawyers, Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of a special court, passed the order yesterday.

Lobi, already sentenced to eight years imprisonment for evading income tax, now faces the graft case along with his detained wife.

On March 21, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Gulshan Police Station accusing Lobi, also former president of Bangladesh Cricket Board, and his wife of concealing information in their wealth statement submitted to the commission.

The Lobi couple amassed wealth worth Tk about 25 crore seen as disproportionate to their known sources of income, the ACC alleged.

On February 6, the joint forces arrested Lobi at his Gulshan residence while his wife on June 26 at a city hospital.

Tk 5,213cr legalised in tax amnesty time

NBR boss says response not up to expectation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About Tk 5,213 crore was legalised under the government-granted opportunity of declaring undisclosed earnings by paying taxes and penalties within a time limit that expired on Sunday.

According to National Board of Revenue (NBR) sources, 42,459 people legalised the amount paying Tk 802 crore in taxes.

The NBR received over Tk 200 crore in taxes from more than 16,500 people on the last day of this opportunity.

NBR Chairman Badiur Rahman hoped the money now legalised would help growth of the national economy through its utilisation in

different sectors.

He however said the response from undisclosed money holders was not up to expectation. The time limit for the opportunity given to them was extended with the hope that at least Tk 1,500 crore would be received in taxes from them.

The NBR will continue its vigilance on those who still hold huge amounts of undisclosed money. It will also investigate whether any wealthy person disclosed only a part of the undisclosed wealth, the chairman said.

Of the people who legalised their money, 20,900 disclosed Tk 3,025 crore and paid Tk 495 crore in taxes in eight income tax circles in Dhaka region.

In Chittagong region, 8,274 people legalised about Tk 792 crore in three circles and they paid Tk 109 crore in taxes.

In Rangpur region, 1,957 people disclosed Tk 177 crore paying Tk 19 crore in taxes and in Rajshahi region, 2,159 people disclosed Tk 266 crore paying taxes of about Tk 32 crore.

A total of 1,629 people legalised Tk 137 crore in Barisal region, 4,347 people disclosed Tk 261 crore in Khulna region and 2,446 people legalised Tk 337 crore in Sylhet region.

The NBR also received Tk 45 crore in taxes from 158 people of the largest taxpayers unit (LTU),

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British foreign office director arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Foreign Office Asia Director John Dennis will arrive in Dhaka today on a three-day official visit.

He will meet government high-ups to discuss the importance of holding credible elections to sustain democracy.

During his first official visit to Bangladesh, Dennis will meet President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Army Chief Moeen U Ahmed, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury and the foreign secretary.

A British High Commission press release yesterday said he would be "Seeking to emphasise the importance of credible elections in the country that can sustain democracy in the longer term."

"He will discuss progress on

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PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion personnel led by a mobile court seize fake power cables of different brands at a house in Siddikbazar in the capital yesterday. The court sentenced 10 people to a year in prison and fined them Tk 1 lakh each in this connection.

Spices get costlier as Eid draws nearer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the Eid festival nears, a section of retailers is making 40 to 50 per cent profit selling spices like cardamom, cumin and cinnamon, taking advantage of the relaxed government monitoring of the spices market.

However, government agencies would start more vigorous monitoring of the market, sources said. Ruhul Amin Rashed, a high-ranking member of the joint forces, said, "We did not think much about this problem with spices market before. The demand of the spices grows before Eid, so the market would be monitored from now on."

A wide gap between the wholesale prices and retail prices were seen during The Daily Star's visits to different markets in the capital yesterday.

Cumin was selling between Tk 360 and Tk 400 per kg at retail markets but wholesalers were selling it between Tk 250 and 300 depending on variety and quality.

Importers say the country consumes around 800 tonnes of cumin a month, which are imported from Syria and Iran.

The retailers are making high profit from cardamom as well, charging between Tk 760 and Tk 800 per kg while the wholesalers

are selling it between at Tk 400 and 600, depending on variety and quality.

Importers bring in around 100 tonnes of cardamom from Dubai, which are actually produced in Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria and Iran.

Cinnamon is selling at Tk 80 per kg at Moulvibazar, Dhaka wholesale market but it is selling between Tk 130 and 140 in retail.

Prices of black pepper, raisin and coriander also abnormally varied between the wholesale and retail markets.

A trader of the Karwan Bazar retail market Abdul Baset said prices of spices vary due to quality and origin of the products. "The retailers adjust their profit considering the fact that consumers buy small quantities of spices," he added.

Enayet Ullah, an importer, said retailers always make good profit selling spices.

He said importers of spices are facing difficulties as pre-shipment inspection companies have increased their charge for Clean Report of Findings (CRF).

The price of spices have increased in the world market and the freight charges have gone up as well, resulting in high price of spices in the local market, he said.



Thai coup gen quits junta to join cabinet

AFF, Bangkok

Thailand's General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, who led last year's coup, has stepped down as head of the nation's junta, paving the way for him to join the cabinet, a spokesman said Monday.

"His resignation took effect on September 30," said junta spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd.

"Sonthi said he has completed his mission as the head of the Council for National Security (CNS)," the spokesman said, using the junta's formal name.

Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk, head of the air force, took the helm of the junta on Monday, Sansern said.

Sonthi, who turns 61 Tuesday, had announced earlier in the day that he would join the army-installed government as a deputy

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PHOTO: STAR

A makeshift kitchen market on railway tracks near Khilgaon level crossing in the city where both sellers and consumers risk their life every day.

1,000 missing in Myanmar after protests quashed

UN envoy meets junta boss today

AFF, Bangkok/Yangon

With protests quashed and many monasteries empty, fears are growing for those who have disappeared into Myanmar's grim prisons in recent days as rights groups say more than 1,000 are missing.

Amid the pervasive climate of fear in military-ruled Myanmar -- where troops patrol streets, news has been stifled, and Internet links cut -- observers are struggling to assess just how many have been rounded up.

Security forces have launched overnight raids to pick up more

monks and members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), headed by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, herself under house arrest for most of the past 18 years.

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari, sent to Myanmar to express outrage over the crackdown on anti-government protests, has been forced to wait until today to meet junta leader Than Shwe, the regime said.

Gambari made his second trip in two days to the country's new and remote capital Naypyidaw, hoping to see the reclusive general.

But officials said he was taken to another distant corner of the country for a political workshop instead, in a move that puzzled analysts and highlighted the unpredictable nature of the regime.

In the main city of Yangon, which bore the brunt of the campaign to shut down two weeks of anti-government rallies, the military presence lifted slightly and shops and Buddhist pagodas reopened.

The secretive regime, which has often fended off UN envoys wanting to visit the country, is facing

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LDP now Bikolpa Dhara again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headed by former president Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday restored its previous identity as Bikolpa Dhara Bangladesh.

The LDP took this decision to be eligible for invitation from the Election Commission (EC) for the ongoing electoral reform talks with it, party sources said.

According to the policy set by the EC, for a political party to be eligible to receive invitation for the talks, it must have secured at least one parliamentary seat in any general election since the independence of Bangladesh, or it must have secured at least two percent of cast votes in any general election since the independence, or it must have committees in 32 districts and in all upazilas under those districts with a minimum of 1,000 members in each district unit and 200 members in each upazila unit.

The LDP does not meet the EC criteria.

If they (LDP) restored its former identity as Bikolpa Dhara Bangladesh, it would be invited for talks, the EC had earlier told newsmen.

A Bikolpa Dhara press release yesterday said, "Most of our party leaders and workers do not want use of the name LDP, and therefore we restored the name Bikolpa Dhara Bangladesh."

Signed by Maj (ret'd) MA Mannan, secretary general of the party, the press release also said an LDP leader's proposal to divide Bangladesh into 11 provinces was against the ideals and principles of LDP.

Besides, the image of LDP was tarnished as some of its leaders were allegedly involved in corruption of the previous BNP-led coalition

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Burqa-clad bomber kills 16 in Pakistan

230 opposition MPs quit Houses

AGENCIES, Peshawar/Islamabad

A suicide bomber disguised in a woman's burqa struck at a police checkpoint in northwestern Pakistan on Monday, killing at least 16 people including four policemen, officials said.

The blast happened on the outskirts of Bannu, a key garrison town near Pakistan's troubled tribal areas bordering Afghanistan where the army is battling al-Qaeda and Taliban militants.

It was the latest in a string of deadly attacks in Pakistan since

government troops stormed the al-Qaeda-linked Red Mosque in Islamabad in July, and comes days before President Pervez Musharraf seeks re-election.

"A man disguised in a burqa got out of an autorickshaw when police stopped the vehicle for a search at a checkpoint. He then blew himself up," police officer Asar Islam told AFP.

Interior ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema said 16 people were killed and 29 were wounded and that authorities were still investigating the blast.

Officials said four policemen and four women were among those killed.

"We have received some severed limbs and we are trying to ascertain if they belonged to the bomber," said Mohammad Usman, a doctor at the local hospital in Bannu.

Police sources said they had earlier received intelligence that male suicide bombers dressed in all-covering women's burqas, a common garment in conservative northwestern Pakistan, would soon launch attacks.

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PHOTO: STAR

This canal in Manda in the capital is virtually clogged with garbage, an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. The photo was taken yesterday.

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Get Prayer times from Ward Menu

	Iftar	Sehri
	5:46 PM	4:31 AM

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Oct	Sehri	Iftar
19	2		5-48
20	3	4-31	5-47
21	4	4-32	5-46

Prayer Timing

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-31	4-41
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-48	6-03
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation