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POLITICAL PARTIES' INCOME, EXPENDITURE HC for people's access to info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ruled that people must have access to income and expenditure statements of political parties under the Right to Information Act.

It also declared illegal the Election Commission's refusal in 2013 to provide such information to Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan), a civil society platform.

The verdict came following the hearing on a writ petition by Sujan that had challenged a decision of the Information Commission to uphold the EC's refusal.

The observations of the HC and the basis of the verdict could not be known, as the court is yet to release the full text of the judgment.

Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz said the commission was yet to decide whether to move an appeal before the Supreme Court, challenging the HC verdict.

Petitioner's lawyer Sharif Bhuiyan told The Daily Star that public institutions were obliged to provide information relating to people's affairs to anyone seeking it under the RTI Act 2009 following the HC judgment.

The law, however, does not require the institutions to provide information about some issues, including personal, foreign countries, intellectual properties and researches. In those cases, the reasons behind not giving information must be laid out, Sharif said.

Yesterday's verdict will help establish people's legal and constitutional right to get information from the public institutions, he said, adding that it held significance to the media and journalists too as the institutions would be bound by the law to provide information to them.

Sujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder in June 2013 sought information from the EC about annual income and expenditure of the registered political parties.

The EC replied that the information was secret and could not be given without the consent of the political parties.

Badiul then appealed to the Information Commission for a directive



A wild rose and wild strawberries in the bushes of Tanguar Haor of Sunamganj. Bottom, bushes on the bank of the haor.

PHOTO: MOKARAM HOSSAIN

In quest of the Jewels of Haors

MOKARAM HOSSAIN

People say that we do not have the tradition of rose cultivation here in Bangladesh. The rose cultivation in our country is entirely a new phenomenon. The Middle Eastern or European countries are referred to as the origin of rose.

What is surprising, however, is that we have an indigenous variety of rose

amidst our very nature and it is in the wetlands of the Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj and other haors of greater Sylhet region. This particular variety may exist in the low-lying areas of Netrokona as well.

This plant species is thought to be the lone water resistant species and they remain under water for quite a long

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Obama to visit Cuba next month

Not likely to meet Fidel Castro

REUTERS, Washington/Havana

President Barack Obama yesterday announced a historic visit to Cuba next month, speeding up the thaw in relations between the two Cold War former foes.

In the first US presidential trip to the Caribbean nation in nearly 90 years, Obama will meet with Cuban President Raul Castro, entrepreneurs, and "Cubans from different walks of life" during the trip on March 21 and 22, the White House said.

But a top aide said the US president is unlikely to

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Banglabandha opens immigration services

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Immigration services at Banglabandha land port in Panchagarh and the corresponding Phulbari land port in Jalpaiguri of West Bengal began yesterday amid festivity and hope that it would boost trade and tourism between the two countries.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Minister of State for External Affairs of India Vijay Kumar Singh jointly inaugurated the immigration services.

This is the 28th land port through which movement of people between India and Bangladesh would take place.

The immigration service is part of several measures being taken by the governments of Bangladesh and India to increase people-to-people contact and facilitate movement of goods between the two countries and the sub-region.

The Phulbari immigrations will connect people from Rangpur and Dinajpur districts of Bangladesh, and Jalpaiguri, Cooch Bihar, Darjeeling and Dinajpur districts of northern West Bengal, and Sikkim and Assam, according to a statement of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

Prior to the inauguration, a discussion was held at Banglabandha land port, where Vijay Singh, who took part in Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, said the relationship between two neighbouring countries would be stronger through the opening of the immigration service there.

The two countries would reap the benefits through trade, tourism, education, and health care services, he said.

Echoing Singh, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said: "Through the opening of the port, the relationship between the two countries will be strength

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Compensate Jihad's family

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ruled that the government would have to compensate the family of Jihad, a four-year-old who died falling down a 300-foot well shaft in the capital's Shahjahanpur in 2014.

In its full verdict, the court would fix the amount and say who should pay it.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo came up with the rule following a writ petition filed by Children's Charity Bangladesh Foundation, a rights organisation.

Jihad fell into an unprotected well shaft while playing with other children in Shahjahanpur Railway Colony on December 26, 2014.

His body was pulled out by a group of volunteers the following day, shortly after the government agencies called off the rescue bid, saying there was no sign of the boy inside the well.

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'Sunglass Cat'



ODDITYCENTRAL.COM

Meet Bagel, a.k.a "Sunglass Cat", who became a social media sensation because of an eye condition that requires her to wear sunglasses at all times. Her shades are decorated with stick-on jewels, giving her a cool vibe that has earned her a reputation as one of the internet's coolest cats.

The Los Angeles feline was born without eyelids and her eyes are unable to produce tears. She was rescued from a shelter by Karen McGill when she was a two-month-old underweight kitten. Karen had to nurse her back to health, feeding her by hand every thirty minutes. Later, Bagel got three surgeries for her eye condition, and Karen still needs to apply drops to her eyes several times a day.

To protect Bagel's sensitive eyes from harsh sunlight and dust, Karen came up with the idea of putting shades on her all the time. Over time, Bagel

Ruling party obstructing BNP council

Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said the ruling party men keep on saying that they would not try to stop the BNP from holding its council, but "they are not giving us permission for a venue".

"How will the council be held if they do not give permission for a venue? Will it be held at my home? Or at my small office [Gulshan office]?" she said.

Khaleda was addressing a programme to mark the 36th founding anniversary of Bangladesh Jatiyabadi Tanti Dal at her Gulshan office.

After six years, the BNP decided to hold its sixth national council on March 19. The party leaders said it had sought permission for

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TK 251CR SCAM

Janata Bank ex-GM, 4 others sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sued former Janata Bank general manager Monjerul Islam and four others in connection with embezzling Tk 250.96 crore between 2010 and 2012.

Monjerul is now the Deputy Managing Director of Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd.

The other accused in the case are: Dhaka Trading

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Children offload stones from a boat at the Ropeway site of a stone quarry in Bholaganj of Sylhet. Some of the children seem to be not even teens. They are toiling away at the hazardous quarry when they are supposed to be in school. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

DEADLY BLAST IN ANKARA

Turkey blames Kurdish militants

Vows response in Syria, Iraq as warplanes hit PKK camps

REUTERS, Ankara/Istanbul

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed a Syrian Kurdish militia fighter working with Kurdish militants inside Turkey for a suicide car bombing that killed 28 people in the capital Ankara, and he vowed retaliation in both Syria and Iraq.

A car laden with explosives detonated next to military buses as they waited at traffic lights near Turkey's armed forces' headquarters, parliament and government buildings in the administrative heart of Ankara late on Wednesday.

Davutoglu said the attack was clear evidence that the YPG, a Syrian Kurdish militia that has been supported by the United States in the fight against Islamic State in northern Syria, was a terrorist organisation and that Turkey, a Nato member, expected cooperation from its allies in combating the group.

Within hours, Turkish warplanes bombed bases in northern Iraq of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a three-decade insurgency against the Turkish state and which Davutoglu accused of collaborating in the car bombing.

Also yesterday, at least six soldiers were killed in an attack on their convoy in southeastern Turkey blamed on Kurdish militants, security sources said.

Turkey's armed forces would continue their shelling of recent days of YPG positions in northern Syria, Davutoglu said, promising that those responsible would "pay the price".

"Yesterday's attack was directly targeting Turkey and the

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PRAYER TIMING

FEBRUARY 19

Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5-20	12-30	4-30	6-03	7-30

JAMAAT 5-55 1-15 4-45 6-07 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION