



Inflation eases in Sep but still above 9%

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Price of 12kg LPG cylinder up Tk 35 in October

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US VP rivals defend Trump, Harris in polite debate

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Joty wants to set the tone in landmark game

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7 corporate giants barred from share transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to ensure tax compliance, the government has blocked the transfer of shares of seven corporate giants that thrived under the Awami League government.

The companies are Bashundhara Group, Orion Group, Summit Group, Beximco Group, S Alam Group, Nassa Group, and Third Wave Technologies, now Nagad Ltd.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday directed the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms (RJSC) to immediately freeze any sales or transfers of shares by these companies through donations or other means.

The NBR has the authority under the Income Tax Act to block or seize taxpayers' properties temporarily to prevent tax evasion, says a letter NBR's Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) wrote to the RJSC.

"There are serious allegations of tax evasion and other financial irregularities against these companies. Your cooperation is crucial for the national interest," reads the letter.

Following the directive, the RJSC blocked share transfers by the owners of the companies associated with the corporations.

The RJSC official identified more than 300 firms connected to

➔ The companies thrived during AL gov't's tenure

➔ NBR cites serious allegations of financial irregularities, including tax evasion

➔ Account details of heads of 5 groups were sought a month ago

owners of these business groups and their family members, said a senior official, requesting anonymity.

"We have barred share transfer of the companies owned by people like Mohammed Saiful Alam and Salman F Rahman, their children, and spouses as per the directive," the official said.

In his reaction to the NBR move, Orion Group Managing Director Salman Obaidul Karim told The Daily Star that his company is "fully committed to transparent business practices".

He believes if the NBR conducts an in-depth investigation, it will find no financial irregularities like tax evasion.

Mohsena Hassan, head of public relations of Summit Corporation Ltd, said the company has "never done any irregularity of any nature, certainly not in finance".

Mentioning Summit's investments in different sectors, she said, "Summit brings goodwill and investment for and to Bangladesh. Such bracketing of Summit with other companies destroys Summit's ability and Bangladesh's goodwill."

"While Summit is not contemplating any sale or transfer of shares, for good order, we have already written to the authorities to remove our name while the NBR may investigate to the fullest extent," said Mohsena.

Tanvir A Mishuk, founder of Nagad Ltd, said, "This is an abnormal situation for us. To me, it seems a new plot has been orchestrated by an influential group to destroy Nagad by including its name on the list."

He said Nagad is very transparent when it comes to taxes. "How can a company that has consistently received awards for paying VAT be accused of tax evasion? And as Nagad is yet to make profit, corporate and other taxes do not apply to us. So, how can we evade taxes?"

A Bashundhara Group spokesman did not take phone calls for comments. This correspondent also tried to get comments from Beximco and S Alam by phone calls and texts but could not reach them.

More than a month ago, the NBR had asked for bank account details of the heads of five major business groups to assess their tax compliance.

They are Salman F Rahman, vice-chairman of Beximco Group; SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



The Bhabadah Mashihati College in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila has remained inundated for around two months now, prompting the authorities to halt all academic activities there. The vast Bhabadah region covers 200 villages in three upazilas in Jashore and two in Khulna. As surrounding rivers have lost their navigability due to the accumulation of silt, there is no proper drainage for rainwater, and the region remains submerged throughout the monsoon almost every year. At least 65 educational institutions in the region are currently under water. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

8 more die of dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 8 more people died from dengue in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday as the country grapples with an outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease.

Of the 8 deaths, five died in the capital. Three deaths were reported in Khulna.

At least 1,017 dengue patients were hospitalised in the 24-hour period, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Dengue has so far claimed at least 174 lives this year and 33,099 cases have been reported.

According to DGHS data, 3,450 dengue patients were undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country. At least 29,475 patients have been released from the hospital, it added.

In recent days, hospitals, especially those in Dhaka, have reported a large number of dengue patients suffering high fever, joint pains, and vomiting.

Telcos' service falls short of BTRC standard

Shows drive test result with state-of-art system

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Mobile operators performed poorly in the telecom regulator's latest drive test to assess service quality, reinforcing users' claims of experiencing substandard service.

The drive tests were conducted between February 14 and June 5 across Dhaka city corporations, Narayanganj, Keraniganj and Savar upazilas with the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's newly acquired system from Germany that was purchased for 1.5 million euros.

Maintaining the quality of service (QoS) is a fundamental requirement enshrined in telecommunications licences, said Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, a telecom sector expert.

"Since 2011, licensees have negotiated these standards through consultation and negotiation and the recent report, if accurate, highlights a significant failure to uphold the commitments made upon accepting these licences," he said.

Robi, which has 5.8 crore customers as of August, performed the best, failing in only five key performance indicators (KPIs) out of 40 across four areas.

Market leader Grameenphone, which

has 8.5 crore subscribers, failed in six KPIs, Banglalink in 14 and Teletalk in a staggering 26, shows the test results.

For internet services, only the state-owned Teletalk failed to meet the BTRC's benchmarks, with Robi faring the best.

NUMBER OF KPIS MISSED BY TELCOS

Teletalk	26
Banglalink	14
Grameenphone	6
Robi	5

SOURCE: BTRC

In Dhaka city, Banglalink, which has 4.2 crore customers, fared the worst among the three private carriers: it failed to meet five of the 10 KPIs. For instance, the operator's call drop rate was above the BTRC's ceiling of 2 percent in Dhaka city: it was 2.59 percent.

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Govt to sit with major political parties Oct 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government will hold talks with major political parties on October 5 regarding the progress of the six reform commissions and the law and order situation in the country.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and other advisers will take part in the dialogue, Shafiqul Alam, press secretary of the chief adviser, told reporters at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

Asked about the duration of the dialogue and whether all parties will participate on October 5, he said that the decision to extend the dialogue would be made on that very day.

These talks are the continuation of the interim government's previous two meetings with the political parties since it took office on August 8, Shafiqul said.

The six reform commissions will be fully formed with the inclusion of all their members within two or three days, the press secretary said, adding that the terms of reference for the commissions have already been finalised and the authorities are currently looking for office space.

He said that another round of talks with the political parties will be held SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Khagrachhari Section 144 withdrawn as tensions ease

Govt committee to probe violence

STAR REPORT

The Khagrachhari administration yesterday formed a four-member committee to investigate Tuesday's racial violence that ensued after a schoolteacher was beaten to death for allegedly raping an eighth grader.

Meanwhile, the mother of the girl, who is from Tripura community, filed a case accusing Abul Hasnat Muhammad Sohail Rana, the dead teacher, of raping her daughter, said Abdul Baten Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Khagrachhari Police Station.

The girl was still in hospital, said a doctor.

Police filed another case accusing 400 to 500 unnamed people of battery and obstruction of police duties, he added.

An additional district magistrate is leading the

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Dust and smoke billow from the site of an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's southern suburb of Shayyah in Lebanon yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Fierce clashes rage inside Lebanon

Israeli infantry, armoured units join ground ops; Hezbollah vows to push back invading forces

AGENCIES

Hezbollah said its fighters were engaging Israeli forces inside Lebanon yesterday, reporting ground clashes for the first time since Israel began pushing into its northern neighbour in a campaign to hammer the Iran-backed armed group.

The Israeli military said regular infantry and armoured units were joining its ground operations in Lebanon, a day after Israel was attacked by Iran in a strike that raised fears the oil-producing Middle East could be engulfed in a wider conflict. Eight Israeli soldiers have been killed in the combat, the Israeli military said.

Iran said yesterday its missile attack - its biggest assault on Israel - was over barring further provocation, but Israel and the United States promised to hit back hard.

Hezbollah fighters clashed with Israeli troops in the border town of Maroun el-Ras and pushed back forces near other border towns. The Iran-backed group said it has destroyed three Merkava tanks with guided rockets. The group also fired rockets at military posts inside Israel. SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

- ➔ Israel renews strikes in Beirut's southern suburbs
- ➔ Hezbollah targets Israel's Haifa with missile salvo
- ➔ 55 more Lebanese people killed in 24 hours