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NATIONAL ELECTION

NCP warns of fallout if denied Shapla symbol

SHAMIMA RITA

National Citizen Party said if it did not get Shapla (water lily) as its electoral symbol, then it would have major political consequences and seriously impact the upcoming polls.

On September 30, the Election Commission asked the party to select an alternative from 115 available symbols by October 7, as Shapla was not in the commission's approved list.

Rejecting the request, the NCP plans to respond tomorrow and seek an explanation from the EC for what it describes as a "denial of rights".

The party also said it would work to form an independent and constitutional Election Commission through democratic means if its demand is not met.

There is no obstacle to allocating Shapla to the NCP, and there are no legal barriers to obtaining it, NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary told The Daily Star yesterday. "We will explain this clearly in our letter."

"We will inform the Election Commission that we will not consider any alternative symbol and will ask why our rights are being taken away."



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Restoring public trust an uphill task for EC

Journos tell commission during dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists said yesterday that restoring public confidence in the electoral process will pose a major challenge for the Election Commission, given the widespread allegations of irregularities that were reported in the last three general elections.

During a dialogue with the EC at its headquarters in Agargaon, they also warned that combating disinformation, misinformation, and rumours on social media will test the commission's preparedness.

Hasan Hafiz, editor of Kaler Kantha and president of the Jatiya Press Club, said journalists expect EC officials to stand before the nation with integrity.

"You are walking a razor's edge. Those who oversaw past elections are now facing public scrutiny. You, too, may face the same fate. So it's a do-or-die moment."

He also said the EC needs to have "a clear stance" on the Awami League, whose activities are currently banned. "You cannot exclude Awami League voters; they are citizens of this country... You must clarify your position; otherwise, the election won't be seen as credible."

Shariful Islam Khan, head of News at News24, said, "The greatest challenge for the EC is to restore confidence among ordinary citizens. As we envision a new and promising Bangladesh, the demand for a free, fair, and inclusive election becomes all the more urgent."

Daily Inqilab Editor AMM Bahauddin urged the EC to take steps to combat misinformation and disinformation surrounding the upcoming election.

Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif said the EC is attempting to do many things, but what people will truly assess this time is its moral strength. "Whatever you intend to do, make it visible. Set precedents in at least a few cases."

Abdul Hye Sikder, editor of Jugantor, remarked that

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2



To mark Probarona Purnima, the second-largest religious festival of the Buddhist community, Chattogram Buddhist Monastery organised a lantern festival in the port city's Nandan Kanan area yesterday. As lanterns lit up the night sky, people of all ages joined the celebration with a festive mood.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Sign deals with firms to recover stolen assets
BB asks banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday advised banks to prepare for signing deals with internationally reputed law firms to recover money allegedly laundered by ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her family, and 10 business groups, including S Alam Group.

The suggestion came at a meeting, chaired by BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur, between the managing directors of banks and the top officials of the BB and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit.

During the meeting, information on alleged money laundering by the industrial groups was shared with the top bankers.

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of Mercantile Bank PLC, said they have been advised to sign agreements with international law firms with expertise in tracing and realising laundered money.

Based on the agreement, the firms will be able to trace laundered assets through its vast international network and take steps to

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Tobacco use drops, still above regional average

Says WHO global report about Bangladesh

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Even though tobacco consumption in the country has declined over the last one and a half decades, it still remains higher than the global and South-East Asia regional averages, according to a World Health Organisation report published yesterday.

An estimated 3.71 crore people of 15 years old or above in the country consumed various tobacco products last year, while 1.97 crore people smoked, says the global report.

The projected tobacco consumption prevalence, also in the same age group,



- » Bangladesh has **1.97cr** smokers as of last year
- » **3.71cr** people (aged 15 and above) used tobacco products
- » Country is supposed to be tobacco free by 2040

is at 31.4 percent in 2025 compared to 44.2 percent in 2010, according to the report titled "WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000-2024 and projections 2025-2030".

Bangladesh had a target to cut down the tobacco consumption rate to 29 percent by this year, meaning it is still 2.4 percent behind the goal.

Although WHO report says Bangladesh is on track to achieve a 30 percent relative reduction by this year, anti-tobacco campaigners said it would be challenging to bring it down further because the number of tobacco users in real terms is still very high.

Bangladesh has a vision to be a tobacco-free nation by 2040.

Prof Sohel Reza Choudhury, head of epidemiology and research at the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute, said the base estimate of tobacco users in 2010 was very high -- 44.2 percent.

This rate has come down in last one and a half decades due to various government and non-government initiatives, he said.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



As Saiful Islam works on a road near the Jatiya Press Club, his grandson sleeps beside him on a concrete slab. With both his wife and son also working as day labourers and no one else to care for the child, Saiful brings the boy to work so he can watch over him. The photo was taken yesterday at noon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

French PM resigns hours after naming cabinet

REUTERS, Paris



France's new Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu and his government resigned yesterday, hours after Lecornu announced his cabinet line-up, making it the shortest-lived administration in modern French history and deepening the country's political crisis.

The unexpected resignation came after allies and foes alike threatened to topple the new government, with Lecornu saying that meant he could not do his job. The announcement drove stocks and the euro sharply lower.

Opposition parties

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Bangladesh, KSA ink deal for ensuring workers' rights

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia yesterday signed a labour recruitment agreement, making it the first such deal meant to ensure fair recruitment practices and labour rights.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul and Saudi Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Engineer Ahmad Bin Solaiman Al-Rajhi signed the agreement in Riyadh, according to a statement from the Bangladesh embassy in the Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh's largest labour market with about 25 lakh Bangladeshis, began labour recruitment from Bangladesh in 1976, but there was no formal agreement concerning general worker recruitment.

There are two special agreements: one signed in 2015 concerning domestic worker recruitment and another concerning skill verification in 2022.

There have been numerous

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

New planet in our solar system!

CNN ONLINE

The search for an unknown planet in our solar system has inspired astronomers for more than a century. Now, a recent study suggests a potential new candidate, which the paper's authors have dubbed Planet Y.

The planet has not been detected but merely inferred by the tilted orbits of some distant objects in the Kuiper Belt -- a large ring of icy bodies beyond Neptune's orbit. Something, the researchers said, must be disturbing these orbits and tilting them.

"One explanation is the presence of an unseen planet, probably smaller than the Earth and probably bigger than Mercury, orbiting in the deep outer solar system," said lead author

Amir Siraj, an astrophysicist and a doctoral candidate in the department of astrophysical sciences at Princeton University.

"This paper is not a discovery of a planet, but it's certainly the discovery of a puzzle for which a planet is a likely solution." Siraj and his co-authors reported their findings in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society: Letters.

Planet Y is the latest in a series of hypothetical solar system planets that scientists have proposed in recent years, all with slightly different characteristics but collectively believed to be lurking in the Kuiper Belt -- also home to Pluto, the former ninth planet that was demoted and reclassified as a dwarf planet in 2006.

Planet Nine is believed to be between five and 10 times the mass of Earth and would be orbiting the sun far beyond Pluto, at around 550 times the distance between Earth and the sun. Scientists have hypothesized about hidden planets of different dimensions over the years, ranging from a Mars-size body to a "super Pluto."

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