

## Corruption foe NGO hits Japan political graft

LONDON (Kyodo) Scandals involving donations to Japanese politicians and the misuse of public money figure prominently in a report released Wednesday by a nongovernmental organization fighting corruption.

The Global Corruption Report 2006, released in London by Transparency International, outlines recent high-profile scandals in Japan.

Transparency International, the NGO devoted to combating corruption, has its secretariat in Berlin and 85 national chapters worldwide.

Topping the list of Japanese corruption incidents is the case of the Social Insurance Agency, which was found to have used pension insurance contributions to finance the building of accommodation for agency officials, membership dues for a prefectural association and golf course fees.

The report goes on to say some of the agency's officials accessed other people's pension records, including those of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, out of curiosity.

The pension scandal has spawned growing concerns in Japan over its ability to deal with pension issues in the future, the report says.

The report details the failure of a Liberal Democratic Party faction to report a 100 million yen political donation in 2001 from the Japan Dental Association.

Former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, who reportedly took receipt of the money but denied ever seeing it, resigned as the faction's head following that revelation.

Transparency International said the case is the tip of the iceberg.

"The issue of political funding is sensitive. No party or politician follows the requirements of the political funds control law attentively. Funds are given and taken in secret and the presence of 'black money' in political life means donors and recipients alike further their interests to the detriment of voters," the report says.

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