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Fuel price yanked up

Govt reasons it on high international rates, smuggling; DCCI protests

STAR REPORT

The government has increased fuel prices by around 13.75 per cent on average, effective from yesterday.

The price of kerosene, however, remains unchanged at Tk 17 per litre.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has not been exempted from the price revision though and will now be sold at Tk 335 per 12.5-kilogram cylinder, up from Tk 275.

The government puts the hike of up to 17.86 per cent down to "high prices in the international market as well as in India" and also to a bid "to recoup losses of the state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC)".

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

City scrambles for last drop of cheaper fuel

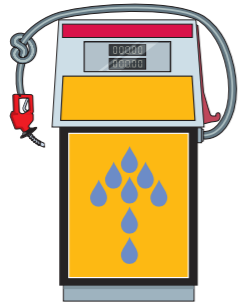
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The information of fuel price hike circulated among filling station owners in the city and elsewhere over cell phone, as the state minister for petroleum and mineral resources briefed reporters at around noon yesterday at his office.

Speculation was rife. Some claimed, quoting State Minister AKM Mosharrar Hossain, that the decision would take an immediate effect, while others preferred to wait until today.

However, the price hike was

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Fuel	New rate (Per litre)	Earlier rate (Per litre)	Increase (Per cent)
Octane	Tk 35	Tk 30	16.67
Petrol	Tk 33	Tk 28	17.86
Diesel	Tk 20	Tk 17	17.65
Furnace oil	Tk 10	Tk 9	11.11
LPG	Tk 335 (per unit)	Tk 275	21.82
Jet fuel	Tk 24	Tk 21.15	13.48
Kerosene	Tk 17	Tk 17	unchanged



PHOTO: AFP

A man pushes his motorbike away from a filling station in the city after it refused to sell fuel yesterday after the government increased the prices.

Holes in price hike theory

STAR REPORT

Facts belie the rationale for fuel price hike.

The government said the fuel price hike was necessary, as the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) incurs huge losses because of 'low' fuel price.

But the fact is the BPC pays over Tk 3,500 crore to the government exchequer as duty and VAT annually.

The so-called 'loss-making' BPC is actually the largest 'cash cow' of the government. As a result, the government is unwilling to let the private sector import and sell fuel based on market dynamics.

Energy experts say the price hike was not justified as the government was not actually incurring any loss. Rather, the BPC was a victim of poor management and wrong policy, they noted.

They also rejected another age-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Boro to bear the brunt

REAZ AHMAD

Diesel price hike will hit hard thousands of boro rice growers who will start cultivation in a week.

Boro farmers using diesel to run about three lakh shallow and deep tube-wells and low-lift pumps for irrigation will have to bear increased production cost because of a Tk 3 rise in diesel price from Tk 17 per litre to Tk 20.

Experts fear the nearly 18 per cent rise in diesel price may also have an adverse impact on foodgrain output.

The price hike comes at a time when farmers are hoping to recoup the loss they incurred due to a bad aman harvest.

The diesel price hike also comes just within five months of a power

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

HC ignored, Shahriar detained again

Govt asked to release Muntasir in 24 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ignoring a High Court order, the government yesterday put writer-journalist Shahriar Kabir under detention for another 90 days.

As per the High Court order, Shahriar was supposed to be released yesterday. But the government handed him over a fresh 90 days detention order.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday ordered the government to release teacher-columnist Muntasir Mamun within 24 hours.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Shahriar



Muntasir

Joint forces recover three bombs from N'ganj cinema

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The joint forces recovered three bombs from the Samrat Cinema Hall at Kashipur in Fatullah, Narayanganj, yesterday afternoon.

An army team defused the battery-operated bombs at around 7.30pm.

A moviegoer on the upper class floor of the cinema hall found a Scotch-taped container under his seat when lights were on during intermission of the matinee show of "Kalir Sardar".

The moviegoer let out screams, sending a wave of panic through the

cinema hall, only two kilometres from the Narayanganj town.

On information, a joint team of police and army recovered three 'stick' bombs in the container. The army sources said the bombs would go off only on impact.

Superintendent of Police Nur Mohd said the candle-shaped bombs were attached with batteries.

The movie theatre suspended its show. Security was tightened after the recovery of bombs. Joint forces were running checks on the vehicles at all points of entry to the town yesterday.

Biggest ever acid haul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CID police recovered half a tonne of acid – the biggest ever haul – from an abandoned house in Hathkholia area in the city on Saturday.

The acid was stored for illegal trading, police said yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a CID team led by ASP Khaleq-uz-Zaman made the recovery and arrested five persons allegedly involved in the illegal trading for long.

They are Prodip Kumar Podder, Nazrul Islam, Fazlul Haq, Moazzem Hossain and Nasir Uddin.

The acid was stored in 17 containers. The quantity includes 255 kg sulphuric acid, 105 kg Acetic acid, 50 kg Hydrochloric acid, 45 kg Nitric acid, 45 kg formic acid and 40 kg phosphoric acid.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

UP polls EC hears plea on rejected nominations tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hear appeals tomorrow and the day after against rejections of nomination papers for the forthcoming Union Parishad (UP) elections and settle them before the last date of withdrawal of candidature on January 9, officials said.

Today is the last date for making appeals against the rejections.

The EC found 7,861 nomination papers invalid due to various errors in filing. Of these, 848 nomination papers for the office of chairman,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Freedom Shahin held again, arrest of UP chairman protested

24 more listed criminals rounded up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces again arrested notorious criminal Freedom Shahin of Rajbari, accused in over a dozen criminal cases including that for murder, from Old Dhaka Saturday evening.

He was arrested only two weeks ago and sent to jail but was released on bail last week.

Three of his accomplices were also arrested in the evening swoop on his hideout in the city's Sadarghat area. They are Azimul Haq Azim, Anwar Shikder and

Nazrul Islam.

In Pabna, thousands of people brought out a procession in Bharara union yesterday protesting arrest of their Union Parishad Chairman Abu Sayed by joint forces. They demanded his release.

The joint forces arrested 'top criminal' Tiger Jalil along with his two sons from his house in Moulvibazar.

They are among 56 people including 24 'listed criminals' arrested from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday. Six firearms and 47 bullets were also recovered by during the period.

In Keraniganj near the city, joint forces raided the house of one Alauddin and recovered a pistol and a pipe gun. But Alauddin escaped.

In Gopalganj, Awami League leader MB Syef, who was APS to former health minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, and Sadar Jubo

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Janatar Mancha Case Court accepts charge sheet against Alamgir, 7 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka, yesterday accepted the charge sheet in the seditious case (Janatar Mancha Case) against former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and seven others.

After scrutinizing the case diary (CD) and other relevant documents, magistrate Mamun-Al-Rashid issued the order.

The court also ordered transfer of the case to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, for its trial.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court on December 26 last year against the eight.

The seven others are former home secretary and incumbent election commissioner Shafiur Rahman, former director of Narcotics Control Department Syed Bazul Karim, former students relationship officer in the Ministry

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Commercial drape over residential zones protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The residents of Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara yesterday vehemently protested the government move that would allow the designated residential areas to be used for 'semi-commercial' purposes.

This move would provide legal coverage for the unauthorised commercial structures already established in the areas, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, leaders of various local organisations as well as local residents said they would not accept any move that further jeopardises the already diminished tranquillity of the residential areas. They declared that if the government did not draw back from the move, they would go for a movement along with environmentalists and members of civil society.

Traffic congestion and noise pollution have already become quite a problem in these areas because of mushrooming commercial complexes and shopping malls, they observed.

Recently, at a press briefing in the housing and public works ministry, Minister Mirza Abbas talked of the possible declaration of the areas for semi-commercial use. Later an agency report confirmed it.

Reports published in different dailies on Friday quoted official sources saying that as the single commercial area of Motijheel cannot accommodate increasing business activities, these are gradually making their way into residential areas.

The report however quoted the minister for housing as saying that the government is taking this initiative 'to check further deterioration of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3