

## Fuel price hike again

Pricey diesel to hit farmers; inflation feared to spike further

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bowing to multilateral donors' insistence, the government yesterday increased the prices of diesel, kerosene and petrol only six months into the last price hike.

The price of petrol has been reset at Tk 35 per litre, raising it by Tk 2, diesel at Tk 26, marking a rise of Tk 3, and kerosene at Tk 25, pushing it up by Tk 2.

The price of octane, however, remains unchanged.

Until this latest hike, the prices of diesel and kerosene were the same. Now, diesel will cost Tk 1 more a litre than kerosene.

Officials of the energy ministry said, after paying the import costs and duties, the actual cost of a litre of diesel comes to Tk 35 and kerosene Tk 38.

"If we had not adjusted the prices, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation would have incurred a loss of Tk 2,075 crore this year due

to the wide gap between import cost and selling price. This price adjustment will help reduce the amount of that loss," said an official.

Explaining the reasons for the price hike, State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain told The Daily Star last night, "As per our energy pricing formula, price of petroleum products has to be adjusted every six months. It was not due to any pressure but to scale down the huge loss being incurred by the state-owned oil agency BPC that we have reset the prices."

"Even after this price hike, BPC will incur an loss to the tune of Tk 1,200 crore this year. To avoid this loss, the government is considering lowering the duties on import of petroleum products," Mosharraf said, adding, "On an average the import duty on petroleum products now is 25 percent and BPC pays the government more than Tk 2,500 crore every year in import duties."

According to the minister, "The

rise in prices is but slight and therefore it will not make any negative impact on the inflation."

On diesel subsidy for farmers, he said he was not in a position to talk about it, adding the finance ministry could shed light on the issue. He however maintained that "As the irrigation season is over, I don't think this hike will affect the farmers."

But Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies Research

Director (BIDS) Dr Zaid Bakht was of an opposite view. "The fuel price hike will affect the inflation," he said, "And as the price of octane remains the same, while that of diesel, kerosene and petrol mostly

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	KEROSENE	DIESEL	PETROL	OCTANE
October, 2001	15.50 tk	15.50 tk	23 tk	25 tk
December 27, 2001	17 tk	17 tk	28 tk	30 tk
January 6, 2003	17 tk	20 tk	33 tk	35 tk
May 1, 2004	20 tk	20 tk	33 tk	35 tk
December 23, 2004	23 tk	23 tk	33 tk	35 tk
May 24, 2005	25 tk	26 tk	35 tk	35 tk

STAR GRAPHICS

## 50,000 marooned in Moulvibazar flashfloods

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 50 thousand people of Kamalganj and Kulaura upazilas in the district have been marooned as 80 villages under 12 unions of the two upazilas have been inundated by flood water due to excessive rainfall and onrush of water from Indian hills.

The main rivers including the Manu and the Dhalai are flowing above the danger level and water of all the rivers in the district is increasing.

Flood affected areas of Kamalganj upazila are Madhabpur, Adampur, Kamalganj, Patanushar, Alinagar, Islampur, Munshibazar unions and a part of Kamalganj municipality.

Major haats and bazars of this upazila including Bhanugachh-bazar, Kamalganj bazar, Adampur bazar went under floodwater.

Floodwater has washed away about 100 feet area of Kamalganj-Adampur road near Alipur. Road

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PHOTO: STAR

One of around 80 villages in Kamalganj and Kulaura upazilas of Moulvibazar district reels under water after a flash flood wreaked havoc in the areas.

## Satkhira bigots hold rallies defying ban

OUR CORRESPONDENT Satkhira

Religious bigots led by Khatme Nabuwat held two rallies in violation of the district administration's prohibition of assembly in Shyampur bazaar of Satkhira yesterday, causing panic among the local Ahmadiyyas.

Over three thousand zealots took part in the rallies held at Kashmiri High School playground and Kaliganj Fultala.

Earlier in the morning, police demolished the podium erected for the rally at the same place at 11:00am, and seized microphones from the activists of anti-Ahmadiyya outfit International Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh

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## HC asks EC to collect info on MP aspirants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the Election Commission (EC) to collect information on parliamentary election candidates' academic qualification, profession, source of income, criminal records, if any, and other issues.

The order came against a writ petition filed one month ago by three lawyers who argued that the EC should compile such information on candidates and make them public to help voters choose their representatives properly.

On the day of filing the petition, the court had issued a rule on the EC asking it to explain why it should

not be directed to take measures to collect information as mentioned in the writ petition. The EC did not oppose the rule.

Yesterday, the High Court made the rule absolute and ordered that when a person files nomination paper for parliamentary election, the EC should ask the candidate to provide a set of information through affidavit.

The required information are about the candidate's academic qualification (to be proved by certificate), and about whether they are accused in any criminal cases at present or whether there were any criminal records in the past.

The candidates should also

inform the EC about their profession and sources of income. The assets and liabilities of the candidate and their dependants should also be reported.

They should also inform the EC whether they had been member of parliament before and the role they played individually and collectively in fulfilling the commitment to the people.

The candidates should also report to the EC about the amount of loans taken from bank and financial institutions (personally, jointly or by dependent of the candidate) or loans taken from bank by the company where the candidate is the

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## Hasina says Aziz picked to rig national polls

Rules out co-operation with new CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has unilaterally appointed the new chief election commissioner (CEC) to clear the way for rigging the ballot in the coming general elections.

"Sensing defeat in the next general elections, the BNP and Jamaat-led alliance has politicised the appointment of the CEC," she said.

"The alliance government has totally ignored the opposition's demand for a dialogue to get an acceptable person in the crucial

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## Bloated ADP finalised with polls in view

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has finalised a Tk 25,290 crore outlay, 10.62 percent higher than the current one, for the next fiscal year's Annual Development Programme (ADP) and non-ADP.

Keeping the election in view, this bigger development fund will be spent on 1,372 projects -- 516 of which are new and unapproved. In contrast, this year's ADP has only 330 new projects of the total 1,199.

The National Economic Council (NEC) at a meeting today chaired by the prime minister will approve the outlay.

The next year's ADP has been proposed at Tk 24,500 crore with Tk

17,000 crore in local currency component and Tk 7,500 in foreign currency. The non-ADP development funds of Tk 790 crore will be used through the revenue budget.

The new ADP includes Tk 2,045 crore block allocation against the current Tk 1,812 crore.

"The block allocation will be used to fund the unapproved 516 projects during the next fiscal year," said a planning ministry official. Although the size of the current development funds was originally Tk 22,860 crore (with Tk 22,000 crore in ADP), this has been revised down to Tk 21,493 crore. The revision will also be approved by the NEC meeting today.

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## ILLEGAL OPERATION 14 more cargo vessels seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen cargo vessels were seized and fined yesterday, the second day of a government clampdown on unregistered and unlicensed vessels.

Two teams of the Marine Court carried out raids on the river route from Sadarghat to Fatullah, and in Narayanganj areas. First Class Magistrates Fazlur Rahman and Abdur Rahim led the teams during the raid, said sources.

Eight sand-laden cargo vessels were seized during the raid on the water route between Sadarghat and Fatullah. Each of the vessels was fined Tk 30,000 for plying the river route without registration and

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## SCBA mulls ways to continue agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) is mulling going ahead with its agitation by modifying some of its aspects to take it out of the purview of the Supreme Court ban on agitation by lawyers on its premises.

The leaders of the SCBA along with former SCBA presidents and senior lawyers of the court held a meeting yesterday afternoon to discuss the future of their agitation in the wake of the High Court injunction.

The meeting unanimously decided to continue their agitation to protect the image of the Supreme Court and the judiciary, safeguard independence of the judiciary and uphold the constitution.

SCBA Secretary Advocate Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star

last night, "The Supreme Court Bar Association will not compromise its agitation. No one is above the constitution, not even the judges. So we want to uphold our constitution," he added.

Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, Advocate Ozaer Faruk, Bangladesh Bar Council member Yusuf Hossain Humaiyun, Advocate Khandker Mahub Hossain, SCBA President Advocate Mahbubey Alam, Enayetur Rahim, among others, attended the meeting.

Meeting sources said the lawyers discussed how to contest the High Court ban. They also discussed strategies on how to deal

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## Nazrul's birth anniversary today

UNB, Dhaka

Today is the 106th birth anniversary of Rebel Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

To mark the day, the government as well as socio-cultural and political organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes.

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## New CEC also wants free secretariat

Believes opposition will accept him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

New Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz yesterday said he favours an independent Election Commission (EC) secretariat but has not looked into his predecessor's proposals about reforms to the EC and electoral rules.

Immediate past CEC MA Syed proposed an independent EC secretariat free from government influence if elections are to be free and fair.

"I do not know how far the government controls or influences the

Election Commission secretariat," Aziz told journalists replying to a query on reported influence of the government on the EC secretariat. "But I believe it should be independent," the CEC continued.

About reforms, Aziz said reforms are a must to make the rules up-to-date. "Reform is an ongoing process. There are no bindings that rules cannot be amended," he said.

The new CEC also spoke about the strong opposition criticism for his unilateral appointment and said he believes the opposition parties will eventually accept him.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) rejected his appointment, terming it an effort to politicise the Election Commission. Other opposition parties expressed their shock and frustration, and slammed the government for making the "unilateral appointment" without consulting them.

The new CEC however said he was appointed High Court judge during the caretaker government

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## SAVAR FACTORY COLLAPSE HC asks why not probe by judge

Blocks owners' disposing of assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government why it should not be directed to form a commission headed by a sitting or a retired Supreme Court judge to inquire into the factory collapse in Savar, find the culprits and suggest measures to prevent such disasters in future.

The court also restrained the chairman, managing director and directors of the Spectrum Sweater Industries Ltd from disposing of their assets and properties.

It asked them to show cause why they would not be directed to pay adequate compensations for rehabilitating the victims.

The court orders came following a writ petition filed by four injured workers and nine rights based organisations. The court yesterday issued the show cause notice on about 20 people asking them to reply in two weeks.

The respondents include the secretaries of the ministries of home, labour and employment, industries, food and disaster

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