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Octane now Tk 90, diesel Tk 55

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government increased prices of petroleum products for the second time during its tenure yesterday, 15 months into the last hike.

This time around the prices went up by 33 to 37 percent compared to the previous hike of 13 to 21 percent in April last year.

The new petroleum price regime went into effect immediately after the government announcement yesterday.

The new price of diesel and kerosene is Tk 55 a litre which is about 37.5 percent or Tk 15 more than their earlier price of Tk 40 a litre.

The new price of octane is Tk 90 a litre, which is 34 percent or Tk 23 more than its previous price of Tk 67 a litre.

Petrol is now Tk 87 a litre, up by 34 percent or Tk 22 from its previous price of Tk 65 a litre.

A cylinder of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) is now Tk 1,000, up from



PRICE HIKE IN FUEL

PER LITRE	KEROSENE	DIESEL	PETROL	OCTANE
June 9, 2006	Tk 33	Tk 33	Tk 56	Tk 58
April 2, 2007	Tk 40	Tk 40	Tk 65	Tk 67
July 1, 2008	Tk 55	Tk 55	Tk 87	Tk 90

Tk 600, while a litre of furnace oil is now Tk 30, up from Tk 20.

Professor M Tamim, special assistant to the chief adviser on energy ministry affairs, told The Daily Star yesterday that the government had no alternative to increasing the prices of petroleum products. "We were helpless," he said.

The price of a barrel of crude oil was \$60 last year, which went up to \$143 yesterday, he said adding, "We would have to spend Tk 17,000 crore in subsidies if we did not adjust the petroleum prices for the new fiscal."

The government will still have to spend Tk 10,000 crore in oil subsidies despite the latest price hike in

the prices of petroleum products, he said.

Asked how the price increase will affect the transport sector, M Tamim said, "There is no doubt that it will have an impact on the transport sector."

"We calculated that the cost of fuel constitute only 32 to 40 percent of the entire cost in transport sector. So the cost in this sector should increase only by 12.5 to 13 percent," he said.

The government expects that transport owners will not increase fares disproportionately. "We shall monitor it," Tamim asserted.

He said to offset the impact of high petroleum prices in agriculture, the government in this year's

budget allocated Tk 540 crore for diesel subsidy to farmers, and if necessary, the amount will be increased.

The cost of transporting a kilogramme of rice from Dinajpur to Dhaka might rise to

Tk 1.493 from the previous cost of Tk 1.298, said a Press Information Department news release last night.

The price hike of diesel is also likely to raise bus fare to Tk 1.05 a kilometre, the release added.

Dr Uttam Deb, chief of research of The Centre for Policy Dialogue, said there was actually no alternative to hiking up petroleum prices, as the prices have been going up unabated on the international market.

"The government, however, has to be very careful, so the diesel subsidy for agriculture sector is duly implemented," he added.

The government also has to monitor strictly the transport sector, so owners do not raise fares

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Upazila polls date soon: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Election Commission (EC) will decide within a few days about holding the Upazila Parishad polls before the general elections, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday.

"You will know about it within two to four days. We shall sit to evaluate our capacity to hold the upazila elections", the CEC said while briefing journalists at the end of hearing on appeals against the delimitation of parliamentary seats of Rajshahi division at the Rajshahi deputy commissioner's conference room.

He said the EC will fix the dates for holding elections to Upazila Parishads, but no polls can be held during the month of Ramadan in September, he added.

"We shall not do anything that can throw the holding of the parliamentary elections into question," said the CEC replying to a query.

"We shall keep October-December period free for holding

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Party politics unwanted in upazila elections too

EC goes for new polls rules

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Upazila elections too will be non-partisan as the Election Commission (EC) moves to have new election rules with provisions barring candidates from using political affiliations.

Officials in the EC Secretariat are drafting the electoral rules and code of conduct for upazila polls in line with those already promulgated for elections to city corporations and municipalities, said EC sources.

The rules and code of conduct for August 4 local polls stipulate that candidates shall not use names and electoral symbols of the political parties they belong to, or names of any political leader during electioneering.

The same will apply to the con-

testants in upazila elections, according to the draft code of conduct.

The last upazila elections held in 1990 were non-partisan in terms of conduct procedures. No rule had been promulgated for that, and in absence of laws, candidates could use party affiliations in polls campaign while the parties could seek vote for their candidates.

The new electoral rules and code of conduct will put an end to that culture, added the sources.

They will also empower the EC to cancel anyone's candidature for electoral irregularities.

Besides, they will require the candidates to seek permission from local police stations beforehand to hold rallies and meetings for electoral campaigns.

The EC officials, meantime, expect the new Upazila Parishad Ordinance to be made into a law soon. After approval of the council of advisers, the ordinance is now at the President's Secretariat.

The new electoral laws on upazila parishad will authorise the commission to fix timetable for upazila polls.

They will also empower the EC to promulgate election rules. And once those are in force, the commission will finalise the draft electoral rules and code of conduct officials in the EC Secretariat said.

The EC has already been preparing to begin holding elections to 482 upazila parishads at the end of August. However, the major political parties have been pressing the

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JULY 3 DIALOGUE AL starts talks with allies on common stand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) during its formal dialogue with the government on July 3 will urge the authorities not to hold the upazila parishad elections before the parliamentary polls.

The party has already started holding talks with its allies in the 14-party combine for taking a common stand in this regard.

The AL Central Working Committee sits today at party president Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi to finalise the common stand in the dialogue.

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Increasing river erosion is a visible impact of climate change in Bangladesh. The photo was taken on the Padma in Munshiganj.

PHOTO: STAR

S Asia braces for climate change fallout

Regional conference starts today in Dhaka

INAM AHMED

Think of a baby born today in Dhaka. The likelihood is that she will see her birthplace sloshing under water by the time she is at the end of her lifespan. Bangladesh itself will then reduce to 20 percent of its present size, leaving only the highlands of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet peeking out of water. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts 35 to 40 percent of Bangladesh's flooded delta by 2050.

Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan or Nepal will not be much better off than Bangladesh, if not worse. For example, Maldives is expected not to exist anymore, Sri Lanka risks a similar fate and India, Nepal and Pakistan faces up to 40 percent drop in food production, frequent flooding and erosion.

And all this is becoming the reality today for the South Asian region with the climate change already taking its toll on this huge swath of land populated by 1.5 billion people, a majority of them

poor. It is against this backdrop that the Saarc environment ministers will meet here on July 3 to look for a way forward through collaborative actions that will help them overcome the challenges. This conference, to be preceded by a two-day expert level meeting beginning today, is in fact a waking up to the realities staring at the Saarc countries.

Already the visible impacts of climate change are scary -- the

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Delwar asks govt not to hold local polls first

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday urged the government to refrain from holding local government polls before the national elections.

The outcome of disregarding public opinion would not be positive, he warned saying, "Local government elections would not be acceptable... an elected government will hold the municipal and upazila elections after the national elections."

Delwar made the comments

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DIALOGUE JP against politics of boycotting election

UNB, Dhaka

HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JP) at its dialogue with the caretaker government yesterday strongly opposed the culture of boycotting elections.

The JP leaders suggested building a consensus to come out of the culture of election boycott and foster practice of accepting election results.

Speaking at a post-dialogue joint press briefing, acting JP Chairman Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud said they requested the

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BTV's autonomy stays trapped in red tape

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government initiative to make the state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) an autonomous media outlet has been caught up in a maze of red tape through formations of committees, sub-committees and a lengthy evaluation process by those.

Sources in BTV and the information ministry said chances of granting the autonomy in the near future are slim as policymakers are convinced that there should be a TV channel to promote the government's own policies and views.

"Also we need to check news

and other programmes that might have adverse impact on viewers' minds and destabilise the country," said a member of the sub-committee recently formed to deal with the autonomy granting process.

He said although two committees are dealing with the matter now, there is a hint from the higher authorities that the move for granting the autonomy will ultimately not be successful at least in the current round.

Additional Secretary to the Information Ministry Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury is heading a committee, where the other mem-

bers are director generals (DG) of BTV and Bangladesh Betar, deputy director general (DDG) news of BTV, and a joint secretary and a deputy secretary (broadcast) to the information ministry.

But the committee has been inactive after a sub-committee was formed comprising DG BTV and DG Betar to evaluate the whole process and to make necessary recommendations.

The members of the committees are expected to visit Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan to see the functions of the autonomous TV channels there.

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GATCO GRAFT CASE Hearing on charge framing adjourned until July 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The hearing on charge framing in the Gatco corruption case started yesterday but the Special Court-3 adjourned the hearing until July 9.

The prosecution started the hearing on charge framing in the case filed against 24 people, including detained former prime minister Khaleida Zia and her son Arafat Rahman Koko, but it was adjourned following a petition from the defence, saying that a quashing petition of this case is awaiting the High Court's decision.

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Noab asks govt to up ad fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) urged the government to increase its advertisement budget by at least four times to meet the additional cost of the newly increased rate of its advertisement.

Noab during a general meeting Saturday thanked the government for increasing its advertisement rate and those of autonomous bodies pointing out that the increase would be meaningless since the government's allocation for advertisement was not increased, said a press release.

Noab also urged the government to reduce value added tax (VAT) on the import of newsprint considering its abnormal price hike.

The meeting expressed concern over the crisis the newspaper industry is facing due to rising production cost. The Seventh Wage

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JUVENILE CRIME 1

Young offenders getting into serious crimes

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Growing negligence by, and indifference of, parents towards children could be the cause behind increasing cruelty in juveniles as is evident from the growing number of offences committed by them.

Experts say the general quality of society is equally to blame for this. They cite reasons as absence of moral and social values in society, effect of private tuitions based education, the extent of "satellite TV culture" and inadequate recreation facilities for the growth of a healthy mind on the growing rate of juvenile crime.

Statistics made available from a Save the Children, UK study show a

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This file photo shows teenagers arrested on murder charges. Experts say social and moral value decadence, indifference of parents and satellite TV culture are leading children to serious crimes.

FILE PHOTO

Since you have to refuel...

