



These three heritage steamers push through the water with large wheels, just like in the old times. Owned by BIWTA, they're docked at the Buriganga, near Babubazar Bridge. However, they get to run only once or twice a year. As hyacinths grow all around them, they're at risk of catching rust and decaying over time. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BNP didn't show spending to hire lobbyist EC on party's annual financial reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday said BNP had not shown its "expenditure" for appointing lobbyist firms abroad in its annual financial reports submitted to the commission for the years 2014 to 2020.

"The commission, in a meeting, reviewed the audited financial reports [of BNP] submitted to it, and they have no information about spending money on appointing lobbyists abroad," said EC secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker.

EC has no capacity and legal structure to probe whether someone had sent money abroad.

"If government agencies that can probe money laundering investigate the matter and give findings to EC, then the commission will review it and can take steps," he told reporters at a press conference at EC office.

EC held the discussion, as state minister for foreign affairs Shahriar Alam earlier requested it to probe whether BNP and Jamaat had shown the expenditure.

"As Jamaat is not a registered political party, EC has nothing to do regarding the matter," Humayun said.

Asked about whether EC had reviewed the audit reports of Awami League, as many have alleged that it had also appointed lobbyists, Humayun said, "EC has not received any complaints regarding the matter, and it was not in the agenda of the commission meeting."

Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam yesterday said the current law has "no clear-cut" instruction in this regard.

Besides, Humayun said EC will start handing over smart NIDs to freedom fighters.

The cards will have "Bir Muktijoddha" and "Heroic Freedom Fighter" printed on them.

LPG price HIKED AGAIN

BERC forms technical committee to evaluate proposal to raise pipeline gas price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After going down for two months, the price of private operators' liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has been increased again.

According to the new rates, the price of every 12 kg cylinder was set at Tk 1,240, an increase of Tk 62 from the previous price of Tk 1,178.

Meanwhile, price of gas for motor vehicles was also raised by Tk 2.56.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) announced the new prices at a press briefing yesterday, saying the new rates will be in immediate effect from the evening at the retail level.

At the press briefing, BERC chairperson Abdul Jalil said they will conduct a public hearing on the proposal to hike the price for pipeline gases as well, after receiving the report of a technical evaluation committee the organisation formed in this regard.

On January 3, the energy division made the first move to more than double the price for pipeline gas.

However, BERC denied this, saying that the proposals were not placed properly, as the distributors didn't attach their audit report and other

documents, as required by the rules.

According to the proposal, the energy division wanted to raise the price of single burners from Tk 925 to Tk 2,000, and double burners from Tk 975 to Tk 2,100 for residential areas, sources told this correspondent.

A BERC official said the committee could take a month for the verification, and the hearing could

motor vehicles was also hiked to Tk 57.51, from the present price of Tk 54.95 per litre.

Making the announcement, BERC Chairman Abdul Jalil said the price of retail LPG has witnessed this rise, as the bulk LPG of Saudi contract price (CP) has increased globally in the aftermath of the volatility caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well

NEW RATES FOR LPG GAS		
	PREVIOUS PRICE	NEW PRICE
PER KG	Tk 98.17	Tk 103.34
12 Kg cylinders	Tk 1,178	Tk 1,240
Price of gas for vehicles	Tk 54.95/litre	Tk 57.51/litre

PIPELINE GAS		
	CURRENT PRICE	PROPOSED PRICE
Single burners	Tk 925	Tk 2,000
Double burners	Tk 975	Tk 2,100

take place next month.

He said the six distributors under the state-owned Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla) have proposed the price hike for pipeline gases again last week.

**LPG PRICES**

According to the newly announced rates, every kilogramme of LPG will go for Tk 103.34 from February, which is up by Tk 5.17 from the previous month.

Meanwhile, the price of gas for

as simmering geopolitical tension between Ukraine and Russia.

"Saudi CP price is slated to go up by \$775 from the previous price of \$420 per metric tonne. Bangladesh's private LPG operators buy their bulk LPG on the basis of the Saudi CP," Abdul Jalil told reporters at the virtual briefing.

The BERC chair also said the price of the state-owned LP Gas Company Ltd's LPG will remain unchanged at Tk 591 for 12.5kg cylinders, as it has no relationship with the global market price.

TikToker by day, burglar by night

4 of a gang held for stealing valuables from IT firm

MUNTAKIM SAAD

During the day, they make "TikTok" videos for the streaming app, just like any other youth. But when the light dims, they go out on a different mission -- breaking into people's residences and stealing their valuables.

What's more, they said they engaged in the crime to fund their TikTok videos.

This came to light after a team of police's Detective Branch (DB) recently arrested four members of the gang from the capital's Banani area, after they stole 16 laptops, two DSLR cameras, cash worth Tk 3.50 lakh and electronic gadgets worth Tk 12.40 lakh from an IT firm's office.

The arrestees are -- Hazrat Ali (25) and Shimul Islam Liton (24), who work with two of their under-age cohorts. All of them live at Banani's Karail slum.

The theft took place on January 15 at the Banani-based IT solutions firm "Shikhbe Shobai".

CCTV footages showed three members of the gang broke into the office around 3:15am by cutting its grille, while another waited on the street outside.

Once inside, they ransacked various office rooms and stole the valuables, leaving the premises around 3:36am. One of them was seen



going out dancing happily.

On January 19, Abdul Kader Saud, chief operating officer of Shikhbe Shobai, filed a case with Banani Police Station over the incident.

Investigators said during primary interrogation, the four said they chose to steal to raise money for colourful costumes, which they deem essential for "hit" TikTok videos.

Investigators said during primary interrogation, the four said they chose to steal to raise money for colourful costumes, which they deem essential for "hit" TikTok videos.

One of the arrestees, Ali, said they planned the theft operation at a shop next to the IT firm's office. Another arrestee said he stood outside the office to act as an alarm for the gang. He said he got Tk 10,000 for this.

DB Gulshan Division Deputy Commissioner Mashiur Rahman said the arrestees have been involved in theft, mugging and drug peddling for a long time.

By raising money from these activities, they make videos for social media platforms like TikTok and Likee. In order to meet the expenses for their extravagant videos, they used to steal from various offices, educational institutions and take away valuables like mobile phones, laptops and computers, selling them at very low prices.

Police said the criminals target residences and offices where security is lacking. "Each premises should have their surveillance system, complete with CCTVs," the official said.

PRAYER TIMING APRIL 5



	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:30	4:15	5:52	7:15
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:30	5:56	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

4,000 constables to join force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police will soon be recruiting 4,000 constables through the overhauled recruitment procedure.

Under the process, Police Headquarters (PHQ) centrally selects a certain number of applicants based on their height and academic results, prepares a written test for candidates, and evaluates answer sheets.

The new procedure ensured the transparent recruitment of 3,000 constables last year.

Corruption was largely not an issue. Before last year's recruitment, PHQ changed the weights of the written and viva marks, and put a more rigorous assessment process in place.

The move came following allegations of rampant bribery and corruption centring recruitments in recent years.

Political leaders and those who lobbied

for recruitment of their candidates allegedly took hefty amounts in bribes from aspiring candidates. Besides, "dishonest" superintendents of police would also allegedly take bribes.

PHQ has already issued a circular to recruit the constables -- 3,400 men and 600 women -- from all 64 districts, seeking online applications from aspirants from February 1. The last date for submission is February 28.

Unmarried Bangladeshi nationals aged between 18 and 20 and having at least a grade point average of 2.5 in SSC exam will be eligible to apply.

"There is no chance for recruiting people who are less competent... as a short-list of candidates are called for the written test after they are centrally screened. PHQ organises the test centrally and evaluates answer sheets," said AIG (media) Md Kamruzzaman.



Around a hundred students of different departments at RU held a candle-lit vigil yesterday remembering Himel, where they demanded exemplary punishment of the accused. Students of RU's fine arts faculty have also started a three-day-long protest, showcasing their artworks near the accident spot where Himel was crushed to death. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: COLLECTED