



## BERC rejects proposal for electricity price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission yesterday rejected the electricity price hike proposal from the Power Development Board, saying the data provided is insufficient.

At a virtual press conference, BERC said the PDB did not provide information on electricity purchase rates from its different producers and has also not submitted the price hike impact data at the distributor and consumer levels.

"The information provided by the PDB was inadequate and that's why we couldn't analyse the real situation. If we hiked the price [based] on the

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A section of the under-construction Dhaka Elevated Expressway near the capital's Chairmanbari area. Construction for the expressway means that much of the work for the Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur rail expansion project is halted. The expressway is being constructed over the rail tracks from Kawla to Kamalapur, which forms a major part of the area of the rail expansion project.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## GAIBANDHA-5 AL questions EC's decision to halt polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League yesterday questioned the Election Commission's decision to postpone the by-elections to Gaibandha-5 while its archival the BNP said the decision proved that no free and credible election is possible under a partisan government.

The AL also said the commission's decision proved that elections are always held under the EC and as per its decisions and thus there is no justification for the BNP's demand for a polls time caretaker government.

Addressing a programme in the capital, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said it was not clear why the voting in the by-polls was stopped on Wednesday.

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## GAIBANDHA POLLS IRREGULARITIES EC blames it on local admin

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MOSTAFA SHABUJ

The Election Commission holds the local administration and presiding officers responsible for the polling irregularities that ultimately led to the suspension of Gaibandha-5 by-election on Wednesday.

The EC pointed the finger at them over their failure to maintain discipline at the polling stations.

It formed a three-member probe committee to find out how the irregularities took place during the by-polls -- the first under the current EC -- and who were behind them.

"Me and [Election Commissioner] Rashida Sultana talked to the SP, DC and the returning officer [on the polling day]. We requested them to enforce law and order to make it a beautiful election," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal told a press

briefing at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

"But the situation did not improve," he said. Munira Khan, president of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), however, said the commission cannot skirt its responsibility as the local administration remains under it during polls time.

"The whole thing about the by-polls shows there was a lack of planning on the part of the Election Commission. The commission should be held accountable and asked why the officials would not follow their directives."

She questioned: "If the DC and SP do not go by the EC's decision, how will the commission hold elections in the future?"

It doesn't matter whether the election was held using ballot or EVM, Munira also said, adding, "What matters is who is behind the election."

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## Bangladesh sees drop in hunger severity

Shows global index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hunger severity in Bangladesh has reduced, according to Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022.

Bangladesh has progressed to "moderate" from "serious" status and has ranked 84th among 121 countries, said the report unveiled yesterday.

Among the neighbours, Sri Lanka and Nepal fared better securing 64th and 81st spots.

Pakistan was 99th, India 107th, and Afghanistan 109th, according to the report jointly published by Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide and German organisation Welt Hunger Hilfe.

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## DHAKA-JOYDEBPUR RAIL EXPANSION 3yr project now to take 15; cost rises fourfold

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur railway expansion project is a glaring example of how poor planning, bad decisions and lack of coordination among different government agencies result in huge waste of public money.

If the latest revision of cost and deadline is approved, the project that was supposed to be completed in three years will now take 15 and cost Tk 3,265.76 crore, almost four times the original estimate.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) undertook the project in November 2012 to improve the capacity of a vital section that connects the capital with most of the country's rail network.

It was undertaken without any feasibility study and detailed design, BR officials said.

The Tk 848.60 crore project, aimed at constructing a third and fourth dual-gauge railway lines on the Dhaka-Tongi route and a second dual-gauge line on the Tongi-Joydebpur route, was supposed to be completed within June 2015.

But physical works could start only in February 2019, mainly due to complexities over design and tendering process. The deadline was extended until 2023 in phases.

But, the project, which is implemented with Indian Lines of Credit, has seen just 58.25 percent progress and project authorities recently sought time until June 2027 and Tk 2,158.96 crore more.

Construction of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway over the rail line in the capital is the main reason project authorities sought the extension last month, current Project Director Nazneen Ara Keya told The Daily Star yesterday.

Physical work of the railway project from the capital's Khilgaon to Kamalapur has not started because of expressway construction, she said.

Complexities over land acquisition, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the long delay in starting physical work are other major reasons, the project director said.

Increase of work, redesign of the Turag Bridge, increase in land acquisition costs, and the strong dollar are the major reasons behind the cost escalation, she added.

Dhaka is connected with the entire country's rail network, except Narayanganj, through the Dhaka-Tongi section. This is also part of the Trans-Asian Railway network.

The 22.39km section has a dual-gauge double line with a capacity to operate 112 trains daily, but 120 trains run through the section route currently.

The 11.09km Tongi-Joydebpur section, which links the capital with the north-western region, has dual-gauge single line with a capacity to operate 44 trains daily but 58 trains are being operated now.

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### PROJECT AT A GLANCE

APPROVAL  
Nov 2012

DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION  
June 2015

COST  
Tk 848.60cr

First revision in 2014  
Deadline extended to Dec 2016  
Cost rose to Tk 1,106.80cr

Deadline extended again to June 2023

Proposal for 2nd revision  
New deadline June 2027  
Cost to rise to Tk 3,265.76cr



WORLD STANDARDS DAY  
14 October 2022



RODS OR CEMENT, BRICKS OR STONE

NO STANDARDS  
NO SAFETY

Keeping your ultimate safety in mind, we work day and night to maintain and improve the standards and quality of our steel. Ensuring high-standard products along with our continuous innovation in products and services has made us the country's no. 1 steel expert.

Every year on 'World Standards Day' we wish to inspire you to use high-standard rods, cement, bricks, stone and other materials to build your home, so that future generations can sleep safely.

