

## BERC adjourns process to fix power price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BERC has adjourned the process of hearing for fixing the price of power after the government bypassed it and hiked the retail price of electricity last week.

"We held a meeting today and took the decision to adjourn the process on hearing for fixing the price of power," BERC member (electricity) Mohammad Bazlur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

On January 8, BERC held a public hearing on proposals to hike the electricity price. The commission had 60 working days to announce the new price since the hearing.

But on January 12, the government raised the electricity price at the consumers' end by 5 percent on average, skirting around BERC's procedures by leveraging a recent amendment to the law.

President Abdul Hamid  
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Just to save a few bucks, this van driver was hired to carry large boxes filled with materials beyond its capacity. At any moment, these boxes can topple over on other vehicles causing an accident. This photo was taken in Bijoy Nagar area yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Stand by the destitute: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the affluent section of the society to stand beside destitute people as her government has been working to arrange houses for the homeless.



"Not a single person will remain landless and homeless in Bangladesh. That is our goal," she told the representatives of the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) during a meeting at her office in Dhaka.

In the meeting, 36 banks donated a total of Tk 113.25 crore for the construction of houses for homeless people under Ashrayan-2 project, said PM's Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhawat Moon while briefing reporters.

The premier said most of the country's homeless and landless people have already been given houses and the remaining ones will also get abodes. "Nothing can be greater than the smile and satisfaction of the people who got Ashrayan houses," she added.

She said many who got Ashrayan houses on two-decimal lands are also growing vegetables, rearing chickens, opening cottage industry and shops there. "They're finding a way to make a (decent) living. The life of the people is changing for the better," she said.

Hasina asked the well-off section to come forward in the construction of houses for landless and homeless people.

The PM thanked the BAB and bankers for providing donations on different occasions saying, "I don't even

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## Whose interest will it serve?

### Asks Shujan on government initiative to 'legally conduct surveillance on citizens'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There needs to be transparency about how surveillance technologies are being used to monitor citizens, said Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) in a statement yesterday.

"Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told the national parliament on January 12 that the government is going to commence a method to legally conduct surveillance on citizens," pointed out the statement.

"We believe that there needs to be a transparent explanation about the scope of the technology that is being bought using the citizens' money and will be used against the citizens," said the statement.

The citizens have a right to know this, affirmed the statement.

"What was the aim behind the purchase of such technology, and in what context will it be used and whose interest will it serve? Under which law was this bought? There needs to be a clear explanation about these from the government," demanded Shujan.

Shujan fears that in the absence of a clear guideline, such surveillance technology could be abused to violate the constitutional rights of people that guarantee the privacy of personal communications and the right to freedom of expression.

"If such technology is abused, there will not be personal

**If such technology is abused, there will not be personal privacy left in the country.**

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## Another blow for those already struggling

### Development budget for indigenous communities has gone down, finds MJF study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's development budget for indigenous communities decreased by Tk 108.86 crore in the last fiscal year when compared with the previous one, according to a new study commissioned by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

The report says Tk 2,508.39 crore was allocated from the development budget in 2020-2021, which means an average of Tk 15,258 for each of the 16.44 lakh people belonging to these communities.

In 2021-2022, Tk 2,399.53 crore was allocated, Tk 14,543 for each of the 16.50 lakh people, it says.

Findings of the report "An Analytical Study on Status of Budget Allocation and Budget Spent for Development of Ethnic People in Bangladesh (CHT and Plain land)" was shared during a programme yesterday at the capital's Cirdap.

Addressing the programme as chief guest, Planning Minister MA Mannan praised the study and hoped that such work will be carried on in future.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Speakers at the programme in the capital's Cirdap yesterday.

He said the government is working to improve the livelihood of marginalised people.

Sharing the findings, lead researcher of the study economist Prof Abul Barkat said people of indigenous communities are one of the most marginalised in the country.

He said the study was "exploratory" and done in about a year.

Prof Barkat said it is hard to estimate how much money is allocated for a specific group of the population in the national budget. Yet, researchers tend to find a method to calculate the figure and say something conclusive so that, if need be, policymakers can use it. This has been applied in case of this study.

The report recommended

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## First phase of Ijtema ends with prayer for peace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first phase of the Biswa Ijtema concluded yesterday with the Akheri Munajat (final prayers), seeking peace on earth and prosperity for the Muslim Ummah.

Thousands of devotees of all ages gathered at the Ijtema ground on the Turag banks and on the roads adjacent to the Ijtema venue during the munajat.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Many joined the prayers even from rooftops buildings, nearby houses, and on the roads.

Hafez Maulana Mohammad Zubayer, imam of Kakrail mosque, led the 20-minute munajat at 10:00am.

The followers of Zubair Hassan participated in the first phase, while Muhammad Saad Al Kandhalvi's followers will attend the second phase

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## SHAKRAIN

### Dhaka sky fills up with kites, fireworks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The neighbourhoods of Old Dhaka took on a festive look on Saturday evening, as people celebrated Poush Sangkranti, also known as Shakrain. The last of the Bengali month Poush was celebrated with daylong kite flying, partying and food.

The winter twilight sky was adorned with spectacular laser light shows, fireworks and lanterns.

Shakrain is a traditional festival for the people of Old Dhaka. The streets of Sutrapur, Kaltabazar, Shakhariabazar, Lalbagh, Faridabad, Tatibazar, Laxmibazar, Narinda and Gendaria remained abuzz throughout the day. Enthusiastic children started flying kites from the morning.

People gathered on their rooftops with kites in a myriad of colours, shapes and designs. Some brought loudspeakers to play music, and made sure to use those speakers to challenge people on neighbouring rooftops to a kite fight.

Crowds were gathered in front of shops selling kites. Plastic strings seemed to be more popular among kite flyers.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A sky full of colours and lights -- such was the view during the age-old Shakrain festival of Old Dhaka on Saturday. Traditionally observed as a kite-flying festival on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, new elements like fireworks, light shows and concerts have made their way to the festival of colours over the years.

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## AB Bank Stands Firm With Honorable Prime Minister



AB Bank stands firm with Honorable Prime Minister to build homes (Ashrayan-2 project) for homeless and displaced people. Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina grace the occasion as Chief Guest. Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director of AB Bank Limited was also present.

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