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"What is happening in Europe today could happen in East Asia tomorrow. So we must remain united and firm, standing together for freedom and democracy."

Nato chief **Jens Stoltenberg** on Russia's war in Ukraine



RETAIL POWER PRICE Hiked again, in just 3 weeks

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government yesterday increased the electricity price once again by 5 percent at the retail level – the second hike in 19 days as it steadily retracts subsidies from the power sector while piling the burden on common people already struggling with inflation.

From today, the weighted average price of electricity will be Tk 7.82 per kilowatt hour, up from 7.13 kWh, according to the government circular.

That means a consumer who used to pay Tk 1,000 a month will now have to pay Tk 1,100 for consuming the same amount of electricity.

From now on, the government will adjust the electricity price every month, Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, told The Daily Star.

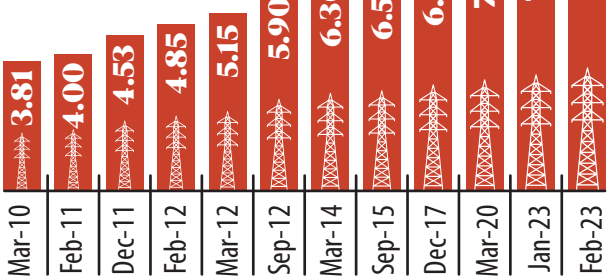
"If the fuel prices in the international market have increased, we will increase the price. If not, we will not. We want to get rid of subsidy – that is the main goal," he added.

The latest hike has left people in a state of confusion.

ELECTRICITY PRICE HIKE

Tk per kilowatt hour

SOURCE: BERC



Take the case of Mahbubur Rahman, who works at a private company. He said he mistook the recent price hike with the increase on January 12.

"I could not believe that the government would hike the electricity price again so soon. It's unbelievable. We have a limited income. How can it be possible to survive if they hike prices continuously," he added.

Inflation averaged 8.76 percent in the first six months of the fiscal year, up from 5.7 percent a year earlier, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



THE BURIGANGA DY(E)ING ... A boy flashes a smile as he walks on the banks of the Buriganga, blissfully oblivious to the harmful chemical dye that has turned a portion of the river pink. The continuous discharge of industrial and chemical waste from nearby factories has been killing the river for years. The photo was taken yesterday in the capital's Shyampur area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Things still bleak on graft front

Bangladesh 12th most corrupt country in world,
2nd most in South Asia, TI index shows

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One notch down, Bangladesh ranks 12th highly corrupt country in the latest edition of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index due mainly to a lack of pragmatic strategies to fight graft.

Of the eight South Asian nations, it remains the second lowest both in terms of score and rank, ahead of only war-torn Afghanistan.

Bangladesh has scored 25 out of 100 in the

latest Index. It had scored 26 in four consecutive years since 2018.

The results are given on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean); the average score is 43, according to the CPI 2022.

In terms of ranking from the top, Bangladesh stands 147th among 180 countries, shows the report.

"The performance is disappointing. We are also well below the global average of 43, which

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

IMF \$4.7B LOAN

Programme to nurse economy to health

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund's \$4.7 billion loan programme won't be a miracle worker for the Bangladesh economy. The programme would hold the economy back from falling off the cliff from the whiplash of the pandemic and the Ukraine war and turn it towards the right track.

"The authorities made the right decision to come to the Fund – and most importantly, to come to the Fund early," said Rahul Anand, the IMF's mission chief to Bangladesh, yesterday.

Turning to the IMF when the country is already in crisis could make the adjustments particularly hard on people – a situation confronting Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

But Bangladesh is not in crisis, Anand said. "Just like countries around the world, Bangladesh is dealing with the impact of global shocks – first from the pandemic and then from the ongoing war in Ukraine," he added.

In that vein, the programme's immediate task is to prop up the country's shrinking foreign exchange reserves, which has already hit businesses and ordinary people hard.

IMF EXPLAINS ITS LATEST LOAN – BI

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

SIX BY-POLLS TODAY

Focus on B'baria as candidate still missing

STAR REPORT

By-elections to six constituencies are being held today, but the Brahmanbaria-2 has become the centre of attention with an independent candidate "missing" for five days.

Though the family of Abu Asif Ahmed, former president of Ashuganj BNP, kept alleging that he was missing, an election commissioner yesterday said after analysing the circumstances, it seemed to them that he went into "hiding".

There are more twists in the by-polls to Brahmanbaria-2 (Sarail-Ashuganj). The ruling Awami League did not field any candidate there. Instead, the party men are desperate to make Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Electoral materials are being dispatched to different polling centres from the assistant returning officer's office in Ashuganj yesterday on the eve of by-polls to Brahmanbaria-2. By-elections to six parliamentary seats, including Brahmanbaria-2, are being held today.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Hathurusingha returns for the second spell



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following months of speculation, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed through a press release on Tuesday that Chandika Hathurusingha had been appointed head coach of the national team for the second time.

Hathurusingha agreed to a two-year deal, starting from February 2023, and will be in charge of the national team across all three formats. The BCB, however, said that it is yet to decide on the role of Sridharan Sriram, who

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Child found dead in Shitalakkhya 7-yr-old's body was wrapped in burqa, mouth gagged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-year-old girl, who went missing from close to her Rupganj home in Narayanganj on January 25, was found dead in the Shitalakkhya river in Dhaka's Demra area.

Kohinoor Akter Sadia, who was still in her school uniform, was discovered wrapped in a burqa with a gag over her mouth, say police.

She went missing as she was playing near her house after returning from school, the girl's uncle Wahidul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"From her school uniform, we were able to identify her decomposing body at the hospital morgue," he said.

Locals spotted the body floating in the river, around 500 feet south of Sultana Kamal Bridge, around 1:00pm on Monday, Inspector Kaiyum Ali Sarker, in-charge of Demra River Police Outpost, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We recovered the body and sent it to the Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy in the early hours of Tuesday," he said.

"We primarily suspect that criminals strangled her to death and dumped her body into the river," the police officer said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

BUSINESS

Fresh blow to small industries

The government decision to increase the power tariff twice last month has created undue pressure on small industries that are unable to keep up with the rapidly rising production costs, according to businesspeople. Customers will now end up bearing the brunt of the higher cost of goods sold, they said.

Small companies usually lack the additional investment capacity needed to face the burden of higher input costs and subsequently become less competitive.

STORY ON BI

S. Alam Group Powering Bangladesh with the Largest Private Thermal Power Plant

SS Power I, a joint venture company of S. Alam Group (Bangladesh) SEPCOIII and HTG (China) is successfully operating the country's largest private sector 1,320 MW thermal power plant at Banskhal, Chattogram

A USD 2.6 BILLION (BDT 28,000cr) MEGAPROJECT

Bangladesh's biggest private joint venture that successfully energized 400KV GIS

- Largest private foreign finance in Bangladesh
- 1,224 MW net to be contributed to the National Grid
- Providing employment to 1,200 individuals
- Supercritical technology having tallest stack in Bangladesh and other advanced features for environmental control

Powering industrial and irrigation systems with low priced electricity