



LPG price sees steep increase

12kg cylinder to cost Tk 266 more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas has been hiked by Tk 22.15 per kg to Tk 124.85 from the previous price of Tk 102.70 for the month of February.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) announced its latest price through a press release yesterday.

As per the new price, a 12kg LPG cylinder, the most common form of marketing the product, will cost Tk 1,498, Tk 266 up from the previous price.

Contacted, an official of the BERC said the excessive price hike was the result of a huge increase in the price of the Saudi contract price (CP).

Last month, as per the Saudi CP, the LPG price was \$599.59 per tonne while the current month's CP was set at \$790 per tonne, he added.

Bangladeshi LPG operators usually import their products from Middle-East markets on the basis of Saudi CP.

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STRAWBERRIES WITH WINGS ... Perched on thin bamboo sticks, two male Strawberry Finches, also known as Red Avadavat or Laal Munia in Bangla, face away from each other, perhaps after an argument among themselves! These sparrow-sized birds, well known for their striking red plumage with specks of white, are found mainly in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, but also occur in parts of China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. They usually prefer staying on open fields and grasslands. Known to be one of the sweetest songbirds, the males also take part in dancing rituals when trying to woo their female counterparts. Though the IUCN listed the birds in the "Least Concern" category, they are becoming increasingly uncommon in some parts of Southeast Asia, mainly due to the pet trade.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

PM to attend LDC5 in Qatar next month

May visit Japan in April, India in September

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to make three state visits this year -- first to Qatar in March, then to Japan in April, and India in September.

In Doha, she will be participating in the fifth UN conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5) to be held from March 5-9.

The PM's participation was discussed at an inter-ministerial meeting, chaired by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, on January 30, said Seheri Sabrin, director general of the foreign ministry's public diplomacy wing and the ministry's spokesperson, yesterday.

"The issues to be raised by Dhaka in the LDC conference are yet to be finalised," she told this correspondent after a weekly press briefing at the ministry.

The LDC5 is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to accelerate sustainable development in places where international assistance is needed most and to tap into the full potential of the LDCs, helping them progress on the road to prosperity.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh may ask the developed countries to continue providing

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BUSINESS

Exports fetch \$5.13b in January

Despite the volatility in the world economy, Bangladesh's merchandise exports grew 5.89 per cent year-on-year to \$5.13 billion in January, official data showed yesterday.

This was the second-highest single-month shipment in the history of the country. The previous highest was recorded in December when exporters brought home \$5.35 billion.

The higher export earnings, along with the growing remittance flow, would give some breathing space to the economy reeling under foreign exchange instability owing to US dollar shortages.

Between July and January, the first seven months of the current financial year, exports grew 9.81 per cent to \$32.44 billion, year-on-year.

STORY ON B1

Conflict flares in Gaza

Israel launches air raids after Palestinians fire rockets

AGENCIES

Israeli warplanes struck Gaza early yesterday, drawing retaliatory rocket fire from Palestinian militants, as violence flared despite US calls for "urgent steps" to restore calm.

Israel said the pre-dawn strikes were in response to an earlier rocket launch and targeted military training camps used by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas.

A statement from the Israeli military said fighter jets had "struck a production site for raw chemical material production, preservation and storage along with a weapon manufacturing site" belonging to Hamas.

The strikes came "in response to the rocket launch from the Gaza Strip into Israel earlier" Wednesday.

"(Hamas) will face the consequences of the security violations against Israel," the army said on Twitter.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant vowed that Israel stood ready to respond to any attack. "Every attempt to harm our citizens will be met with the full force of the IDF."

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem called the Israeli strikes "a continuation of the cycle of aggression against the Palestinian people".

He accused Israel of "opening the door

to escalation on the ground".

During talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged both sides to prevent further bloodshed.

He expressed sorrow for "innocent" Palestinians killed in months of spiralling violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, warning that the Palestinian people faced "a shrinking horizon of hope".

The US top diplomat's visit came after a deadly upsurge in violence in the West Bank last week.

A Palestinian shot dead seven people outside a synagogue in an Israeli settler neighbourhood of annexed east Jerusalem last Friday, a day after the deadliest army raid in years in the West Bank killed 10 Palestinians.

The synagogue attack on the Jewish Sabbath was the deadliest targeting Israeli civilians in more than a decade and was celebrated by many Palestinians in Gaza and across the West Bank.

Israel said its deadly raid on Jenin refugee camp targeted Islamic Jihad militants. An 11th Palestinian was killed elsewhere in the West Bank that day.

This year the conflict has killed 35 Palestinians -- including attackers, militants and civilians -- as well as the six

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CU FINE ARTS INSTITUTE Students asked to leave campus amid protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University authorities have asked the students of the Institute of Fine Arts, who had begun a sit-in last year, to leave the campus residence by 10:00pm yesterday, citing "renovation work".

The decision was taken following an emergency syndicate meeting last evening, reports our correspondent quoting CU Proctor Rabiul Hasan Bhuiyan.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Rabiul said, "After the meeting, the students were ordered to leave the campus by 10:00pm. All physical classes and examinations of the fine arts institute will be suspended for the next one month for some renovation work."

He, however, said the teachers have been asked to conduct online classes.

Earlier on the day, the university's proctorial body along with police conducted a two-hour raid on the campus. They searched every room of the institution's Shilpi Rashid Chowdhury dormitory and the teachers' club.

Asked about the sudden decision of vacating the hall amid the ongoing student demonstration, the proctor said, "Only the members of the syndicate can explain it."

The students started a sit-in programme on November 2 last year to press home their 22-point demand, including shifting the campus to Hathazari main campus.

On November 16, the protesting students locked the institutes main gate

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Neanderthals hunted massive elephants: study

AFP, Washington

Neanderthals may have lived in larger groups than previously believed, hunting massive elephants that were up to three times bigger than those of today, according to a new study.

The researchers reached their conclusions, published in the journal Science Advances on Wednesday, based on examinations of the 125,000-year-old skeletal remains of straight-tusked elephants found near Halle in central Germany.

The bones of around 70 elephants from the Pleistocene era were discovered in the 1980s in a huge coal quarry that has since been converted into an artificial lake.

Elephants of the time were much larger than the woolly mammoth and three times the size of the present day Asian elephant, and an adult male could weigh up to 13 metric tonnes.

"Hunting these giant animals and completely butchering them was part of Neanderthal subsistence activities at this location," Wil Roebroeks, a co-author of the study, told AFP.

"This constitutes the first clear-cut evidence of elephant hunting in human evolution," said Roebroeks, a professor of archaeology at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

The study suggests that the Neanderthals who lived in the area for 2,000 to 4,000 years were

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PABNA 250-BED HOSPITAL

Intern nurses continue work abstention

Demand action over assault of nurse by broker; victim files case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Intern nurses at Pabna 250-bed General Hospital went on an indefinite work abstention protesting an attack on their fellow nurse.

Raja Hossain, a second-year student at Ichhamati Nursing Institute, was assaulted by a broker named Saddam Hossain on the hospital premises on Tuesday.

The victim, who has been working at the hospital as part of his academic programme, filed a case with Pabna Police Station in this connection yesterday, two days after the incident.

According to Raja, locally influential broker Saddam took Tk 600 from a patient for an electrocardiogram test and started to bargain in the ward.

"As I asked Saddam to leave the ward, he became angry and assaulted me. Saddam and his men also threatened to stab me outside the hospital," Raja said.

"I am concerned about my safety," he added.

Protesting the attack on Raja, the Pabna district unit of Bangladesh Diploma Student Nurses Union (BDSNU), called for the work abstention programme at the hospital

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WOMEN = CHEAP LABOUR? ... Women picking Boro seedlings on a farmland in Kagdi village of Shariatpur's Sadar upazila yesterday. According to locals, farmers assign women to do this work as it is cheaper. When a woman is assigned to pick seedlings, she is paid Tk 100 for every 100 fistfuls. However, when a man does the same work, he charges at least Tk 50 more.

PHOTO: ZAHID HASAN RONY

Hit by bike, JU student fighting for life at ICU



JU CORRESPONDENT

A student of Jahangirnagar University suffered a severe blow to the head after a motorcycle hit him on the campus around 8:30pm yesterday.

Zahid Hasan, a fresher at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Enam Medical College Hospital.

At least eight students witnessed the accident.

Zahid, who came to the campus just two days ago

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