

12kg LPG now Tk 1,140

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission has increased the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for August.

The new prices were effective from 6:00pm yesterday.

A retail consumer will now have to pay Tk 1,140 to buy a 12kg LPG cylinder, a Tk 141 hike including all VAT and taxes.

Prices of other LPG cylinders – from 5.5kg to 45kg – will go up accordingly, Md Nurul Amin, chairman of BERC, told a press briefing yesterday at the BERC office in Dhaka.

Per kg LPG will cost Tk 91.14, he said.

“As all the costs and charges have been included in the new price, there is no chance to take extra money. If any retailer or distributor takes more than the fixed rate, consumers can complain,” the chairman added.

Last month, the BERC issued show-cause notices to two LPG companies – Total Gas and United LPG – asking for clarification why they had charged extra from the fixed rate.

“They didn’t reply to our notice. We issued another notice yesterday [August 1]. If they can’t offer a proper explanation, action will be taken against those companies,” Nurul Amin said while replying to a question.

According to the new price, per litre autogas for cars will cost Tk 52.17.

Crackdown on opposition goes against govt pledges: HRW

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh government’s pledges to the international community for holding free and fair elections contradicts the recent violent crackdown on the opposition, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

The HRW in a statement also said excessive force has been used against political protesters, pointing to recent police actions against supporters of opposition party.

It said police fired rubber bullets, teargas, used water cannons, and beat up demonstrators during protests and arrested over 800 leaders and activists of BNP in late July 2023, which damaged the environment for a free and fair election.

Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at HRW, said, “International

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Party colleagues of Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur try to protect him as a group of Chhatra League activists swoop on him near TSC at Dhaka University yesterday. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Russia hits Ukraine grain export route

Silos, warehouses in Danube port of Izmail damaged in drone attacks

AFP, Kyiv

Russian drones yesterday damaged infrastructure at a Ukrainian port on the Danube, as Moscow targeted facilities vital for grain shipments from Ukraine following the collapse of a key export arrangement.

Turkey, which along with the United Nations brokered the deal to allow Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea, urged Russia after the port strike not to take steps that would escalate tensions.

Russia struck a grain elevator in the port of Izmail which sits just across the Danube river from Romania, damaging silos, warehouses and administrative buildings, Kyiv said.

Izmail is now the main export route for Ukrainian agricultural products via neighbouring Romania, following Russia’s withdrawal last month from the Black Sea grain agreement.

Kyiv says the goal of the strikes is to reimpose Russia’s blockade by persuading shippers and their insurance companies that Ukrainian ports are unsafe to resume exports.

Almost 40,000 tonnes of grain were damaged in the strike, Kyiv’s infrastructure minister said.

Chicago wheat prices Wtjumped 4 percent following yesterday’s attack and were still up around 2.5 percent later in the morning, with traders worried anew about a hit to global supplies from driving Ukraine, one of the world’s top exporters, off the market.

“No steps should be taken that will

Ukraine says the goal of strikes is to intimidate shippers considering return.

Vladimir Putin in a phone call.

Erdogan emphasised to Putin the significance of a grain deal that he called a “bridge for peace”, the Turkish leader’s office said.

Failure to re-establish the grain deal “will not benefit anyone” and nations in need will suffer the most, Erdogan said.

In the same call, Putin asked Erdogan to aid Russia export its grain to African countries vulnerable to food shortages.

STOPPING PROPAGANDA CEC to meet Facebook delegation tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal will hold a meeting with a Facebook delegation tomorrow to discuss ways to prevent propaganda on social media.

The meeting will be held at the Election Commission office in Dhaka’s Agargaon at 11:00am.

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said the Facebook delegation sought time for the meeting.

Asked about the reason behind the meeting, he said, “The national election is approaching. With that in mind, there can be a discussion on how to prevent propaganda on social media.”

Three officials from Facebook’s Singapore office will meet the CEC. The delegation will be led by Ruzan Sarwar, head of public policy for Bangladesh at Facebook’s parent company Meta, the EC official said.

Journo suspended from univ over reporting on VC’s comment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Cumilla University yesterday suspended a student, also a journalist, for a news report on the vice chancellor.

Mohammad Iqbal Monwar is a masters student at the English department. He is also a reporter of Bangla daily Jaijaidin.

Amirul Haque Chowdhury, acting registrar of the university, in the suspension order said Monwar was suspended for “violating university discipline”.

According to the order, Monwar allegedly distorted a statement made by VC Prof AFM Abdul Moyeen and intentionally circulated it with misleading information to tarnish the university’s image.

Monwar refuted the allegations and claimed that he only reported the statement made by the VC during a programme.

This newspaper has obtained a partial audio clip of the VC’s statement.

Monwar also said he did not receive any show-cause notice prior to the suspension order.

VC Moyeen told The Daily Star, “The words attributed to me in the report were taken out of context while I was illustrating a different fact.”

Asked if they can make such a decision without any show-cause notice, he said it was made in an emergency meeting based on the recommendation of the proctorial body. Further decisions will be made after an investigation, he added.

On July 31, a report titled “Corruption is the reason for development in Bangladesh: Cou VC” was published in daily Jaijaidin, detailing some remarks made by the VC during a university programme.

Man hacked to death over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A man has been hacked to death over a land dispute with his fellow villager in Lalmonirhat’s Kaliganj upazila.

The dead, Taij Uddin, 36, was from Purba Duhuli village in the same upazila.

Police said Taij Uddin was on his way home after buying some TCB products from Jorgach Bazar area on Tuesday noon. All of a sudden, his fellow villager Karim Mia and his associates, armed with sharp weapons, attacked him on a road. The attackers fled seeing some villagers coming towards them.

Badly injured Taij was rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. He died at the hospital yesterday morning.

OC Imtiaz Kabir of Kaliganj Police Station said the victim’s family filed a murder case with the station yesterday, accusing eight named people and some unidentified others.

All the eight named accused are on the run.

1 killed as BGB, ‘drug traders’ clash

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In self-defense, BGB fired few rounds and returned to Border Out Post (BOP) with the detainee, it added.

Mohammad Jubair Syed, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, said a police team has visited the spot of the clash and confirmed the death.

Locals said, during the clash, Rafique and five others were shot during the clash. When they were brought to a hospital in the camp, Rafiq was declared dead by doctors,

they added.

Mohamamd Alam, chairman of the Camp Development Committee of Leda Refugee Camp, said Rafique

was killed during a clash with the locals and BGB. He could not say why the deceased went there.

Five injured including BGB member Mahmudul, 22, and locals of Leda area Ismail, 60, Osman, 18, Gura Mia, 90, Tauhidul Islam, 35 were taken to Cox’s Bazar General Hospital in the evening.

Rashed Mahmud Ali, chairman

of Hnila union, said BGB members conducted a raid at the house of Zafar Alam, brother of former union parishad member Mohammad Alam.

Drug peddlers, Rohingyas and locals attacked the BGB team while they were leaving the area arresting a drug peddler with yaba, he said.

BGB opened fire in response, Rashed said.

So far one was killed and six others were injured in this incident, he added.

Tarique gets 9yrs, Zubaida 3yrs

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The court also fined the eldest son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia Tk 3 crore and Zubaida Tk 35 lakh. Failure to pay the sums will cost Tarique an additional three months in prison and Zubaida one month.

The judge directed the authorities concerned to confiscate their illegal wealth worth over Tk 2.74 crore.

The prison sentence will be effective the day of their surrender or arrest, said the judge in the verdict delivered around 4:00pm.

Pro-BNP lawyers demonstrated on the court premises for almost six hours, during which pro-Awami League lawyers engaged in scuffles with them several times.

A large number of law enforcers were deployed inside and outside the court.

Soon after the verdict was announced, Law Minister Anisul Huq told reporters at his office that the sentence was a reflection of the rule of law while the BNP supporters demonstrated condemning the verdict in different places across the country.

The BNP will hold rallies in the cities and towns tomorrow and another rally in Nayapaltan on Friday in protest of the verdict.

THE CASE

The court framed charges against the couple on April 13.

Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Muhammad Jahirul

Huda filed the case with Kafirul Police Station against them and Zubaida’s mother Syeda Iqbalmand Banu on September 26, 2007. Syeda was accused of abetting Tarique.

Charges were pressed against the three on March 31, 2009.

At one point, the HC stayed the trial proceedings for around 15 years.

On June 26 last year, the HC withdrew the stay order and rejected Tarique and Zubaida’s petitions challenging the filing of the case. It cancelled trial proceedings against Zubaida’s mother.

On November 1 last year, the court issued arrest warrants for Tarique and Zubaida.

The complaint said Tarique submitted his wealth statement to the ACC on June 10, 2007 through the jail authorities. The statement said he, his wife, and daughter had wealth worth Tk 1.37 crore.

In a report submitted to the ACC on July 25, 2007, an investigator said Tarique became the publisher and printer of Dainik Dinkal on August 12, 1998.

The financial documents show that by becoming the daily’s owner, Tarique gained over Tk 4.15 crore against an investment of over Tk 1.74 crore, said the report.

Tarique also concealed the fact that he owned about 250 shares, worth Tk 2.5 lakh, of Rahman Group.

The complaint said Tarique, his wife, and daughter had properties

and three Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDR) worth Tk 58.45 lakh.

Tarique had 2.01 acres of land in Gabtoli of Bogura. In his wealth statement, he mentioned that he bought the land in May 2003 for Tk 3.45 lakh he earned from his business.

However, his total expenditure during 2001-2006 was more than his income, which meant he bought the property with money from unknown sources.

The case statement said Zubaida claimed that her mother Syeda gave her the money for the two FDRs. Her mother claimed that she got the money by renting out her properties at the capital’s Mohakhali and Motijheel.

However, their claims proved to be false as the investigation found that a man named Enayetul Bari Jewel, who has no relation to Zubaida, deposited the money for the FDRs.

Actually, Tarique provided the money from his undeclared income, the complaint said.

Besides, Tarique claimed that he provided Tk 20 lakh for opening the FDR for his daughter taking loan from Rahman Group, but there was no evidence to substantiate the claim.

Tarique was accused in 15 other cases, most of which were filed in 2007 and 2008 when a caretaker government was in power.

He was sentenced to life in prison in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

He was also sentenced in three other cases.

Exports off to a flying start in new fiscal

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director of Mahin Group, a major garment exporter.

“Domestically, if the political turmoil cannot be managed well, exports may be affected,” Razzaque said.

Centring on the 12th general election due to be held at the end of this year or in the first week of next year, the political scene is heating up after a lull of about four years.

“Past experience suggests both the export and macroeconomy were managed well during the political crises. As a result, export activities remained unaffected,” Razzaque said.

This time too, if the macroeconomy can be managed well, exports will continue to grow as the major economies are recovering from a blip in economic activities, he added.

“Bangladesh is very strong in mass production of garments and the other countries are lagging in this aspect. This is how the local exporters

are still competitive even in the time of a global slowdown,” Mahin said.

Faruque Hassan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, echoed the same.

Another reason for the higher export earnings is that the international retailers and brands have increased the prices per unit of garment items by 10 to 30 percent over the last two years, he said.

The export earnings would have been much higher had the non-garment sectors performed better, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

For instance, leather and leather goods, an emerging heavyweight sector, saw its receipts decline 0.67 percent to \$98.74 million last month.

Home textile, another promising sector, saw its earnings slump by 40.77 percent to \$56.83 million.

Jute and jute goods, a traditional

export earner, saw its receipts tick up only 2.75 percent to \$65.67 million.

Agricultural exports grew 14.53 percent to \$72.58 million in July.

“Even after a 25 percent depreciation of taka, the non-garment sectors remained poor performers,” Rahman said.

Both product and market diversification have become imperative now given the upcoming graduation from the least-developed country bracket, which would see Bangladesh lose the duty privileges that have made it the second largest garment exporter in the world, he said.

Iran hangs 11 from Baluch minority on drug charges

AFP, Paris

Iran hanged 11 members of the Baluch minority on drugs charges within a 48-hour period, an NGO said yesterday, raising alarm the community is disproportionately targeted in a spate of executions.

Nine Iranian Baluchis and two Baluchi citizens of neighbouring Afghanistan were hanged between the early morning on Sunday and early Tuesday, Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) said.

The group added that it recorded a total of 61 executions across Iran in July as Iran presses ahead with a surge in capital punishment that has now seen the country put to death 423 people this year.

Campaigners accuse Iran of using capital punishment as an instrument to spread fear throughout the population in the wake of the protest movement that erupted last September over the death of Mahsa Amini, 22. The Iranian-Kurdish woman had been detained for allegedly flouting the Islamic republic’s strict dress rules for women.