



## LPG CYLINDERS Govt-fixed prices exist only on paper

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission fixes price of liquefied petroleum gas every month, but consumers buy the key fuel at a higher price due to non-compliance by importers, distributors, and retailers.

On August 2, the BEREC fixed the retail price of a 12kg LPG cylinder at Tk 1,140. Consumers in different parts of Dhaka, however, said they bought a refilled 12-kg cylinder at no less than Tk 1,400.

The Daily Star talked to at least three LPG distributors and 10 retailers who all said they were buying LPG cylinders at a higher rate than the price fixed by the energy regulatory body.

The retailers blame the distributors while the distributors point fingers at the importers. But importers



lay the blame on shortage of import, volatile foreign exchange rate and challenges in opening letters of credit.

However, market experts and consumer rights defenders have said all these are lame excuses, stressing that the BEREC fixes the rates every month after receiving input from the stakeholders.

They have also stressed that there is a lack of strict monitoring, which only helps the blame game, causing suffering to consumers.

During recent visits to the capital's Kachukhet, Shewrapara, Tejribazar, Karwan Bazar, Bongshal, Banasree and Moghbazar area, The Daily Star found that a 12-kg LPG cylinder was sold even at Tk 1,500 in many places.

Moreover, distributors have mentioned supply shortfall as another factor contributing to LPG high price.

Wishing anonymity, a distributor of importing company Fresh LP Gas said, "This month the company hiked the price of a 12-kg cylinder at least six times, each time by Tk 20-30."

He said he had bought 70 cylinders on August 20 at a rate of Tk 1,197.

"Our van has a capacity to transport around 360 cylinders at a time, costing around Tk 8,000, or Tk 22.23 per cylinder on each trip. But we got only 70 cylinders this time around, which increased the transport cost to Tk 114-115 per cylinder," he said.

Distributors often receive text messages about LPG price updates from the importers, also known as operators. In a message in mid-August, one importer mentioned the rate of a 12-kg cylinder as Tk 1,197, a 33-kg cylinder as Tk 3,067, a 35-kg as Tk 3,246 and a 45-kg cylinder as Tk 4,164.

The company was supposed to sell those cylinders at Tk 1,045, Tk 2,872, Tk 3,047, and Tk 3,916 respectively in compliance with the BEREC-fixed rates.

"We are supposed to take Tk 50 per cylinder as distributor's charge, but we took Tk 100 because of the hassle and increased transport cost," said the dealer.

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Thousands of BNP activists march in a procession on Toyenbee Circular Road in the capital. The party observed its 45th founding anniversary with day-long events yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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## No 'peace' until regions freed

Says Ukraine's Zelensky; Russia's Lavrov says UN meetings on peace formula 'unacceptable'

REUTERS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said there cannot be "sustainable peace" in Ukraine unless the country regains control of Crimea, Donbas and other territories occupied by Russia.

He also said he never had any doubts about Italy's support for Kyiv after the Russian invasion.

"We want to thank Italy for the political support it has given us and also the EU for supporting our candidacy (to join the bloc) and commitments to ensure the security of our country," Zelensky told the European House Ambrosetti business forum in Italy via a video link.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday that he told United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres that online meetings held on Zelensky's peace formula in August were "unacceptable".

He also accused the West of undermining international institutions by pushing its own agenda. President Vladimir Putin told pupils at the start

of the school year yesterday that it was impossible to defeat Russia.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military intelligence said yesterday that a recent drone attack on an airport in northwestern Russia which damaged

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several transport planes was carried out from within Russian territory.

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**CASES AGAINST PROF YUNUS**  
Global leaders' requests to suspend trial regrettable

Says foreign ministry

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has regretted that global leaders and Nobel laureates in an open letter requested the prime minister to "exercise extra-judicial authorities" to suspend the sub-judice cases against Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The ministry said Yunus and his aides have "resorted to international lobbying" in the face of legal consequences for their alleged or proven violation of law.

"It is unacceptable for a citizen of a sovereign country to repeatedly seek external interventions presumably based on his perception of being above the law of the land," said the ministry yesterday in a statement signed by Muhammad Mohsin Reza, deputy principal

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## 'Mystery' ducts found near biblical relics in Jerusalem

REUTERS, Jerusalem



An almost three millennia-old network of hewn-rock ducts unearthed in Jerusalem has baffled archaeologists, given the lack of comparable biblical finds, or obvious links to an ancient Jewish temple and palace that once stood nearby.

The knee-deep channels, dating back 2,800 years, are located outside Jerusalem's walled Old City. They stand in two clusters, which were discovered 10 metres (30 feet) apart.

Forensic testing of the channels found no blood, the Israel Antiquities Authority said - potentially ruling out a role in animal slaughter for banquets or religious sacrifice.

The ducts also do not appear to have engineered a flow in a single direction, or debouched into any basin, suggesting they were not used to sluice out sewage or rainfall, added the authority, whose research partner is Tel Aviv University.

## Father, 5-yr-old daughter killed as truck hits motorbike

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Bagerhat

A man and his five-year-old daughter died after a truck hit his motorbike on the Bagerhat Khulna highway in Bagerhat's Fakirhat upazila Thursday night.

The deceased were identified as Sohail Faraji, 37, of Sarankhola upazila and his daughter Nawrin Akhter.

Sohail's wife Mimi Akhter, 32 and their elder daughter Nawsheen, 10, suffered critical injuries.

The accident took place at 9:15pm on Thursday when the couple along with their two children were going to Khulna from Sarankhola on the motorbike, said Sub-Inspector Hasnur Rahman of Katakhal Highway Police Station.

The four persons fell on the road and suffered critical injuries after the truck hit the motorbike. They were rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared Sohail and Nawrin dead, he added.



Siblings Lima Akhter and Joy Islam taking part of the tin roof of their house to safety in Ichamara village of Bogura's Sariaikandi upazila yesterday, a day after the Jamuna gobbled up 30 homes there within about half an hour. Erosion by the river has put about 300 families in the village at risk, who are making their way to safety.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

## JAMUNA EROSION 30 homes gone in half an hour Over a hundred become homeless in Bogura's Sariaikandi upazila

STAR REPORT

In mere half an hour, the Jamuna devoured the homes, croplands, and belongings of some 30 families in Ichamara village of Bogura's Sariaikandi. Powerless to do anything, the families watched in horror as everything they owned was swept away, leaving them with nothing.

Just before it happened, a 25-year-old flood control embankment gave way to the strong currents of the Jamuna Thursday afternoon.

The dam stretched for 150 meters and had been protecting the land for decades.

"The families have been living here for years. It was heartbreaking to see them become homeless in a matter of minutes. The poor people! Now, they don't know what to do or where to go," said Helal Ul Alam, a former member of the Kamalpur union parishad who witnessed the travesty firsthand.

"The river was over 100 metres from the homes just a day ago. This is most unsettling," he added.

Local resident Jaheda Begum, 60, said, "We've been living in this village for around 25 years. The river has taken everything I had; I don't even have any spare clothes. I don't know what to do or where to go now."

Another victim, Md Rabbani, 40, said, "Just a few days ago, I spent a lot of money on a new fishing net, which is now lost to the river along with my home and other belongings. I've lost my home as well as my livelihood."

Moreover, another 300 families living on both sides

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