

## Govt to import 4 cargoes of LNG at a time Okays three solar power plants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved the procurement of four cargoes of LNG from the international spot market to increase gas supply during the summer.

The purchase was okayed at a meeting of the cabinet committee on government purchase.

The cost of the four shipments will be around Tk 1,640 crore.

The first shipment will be supplied by the US-based Excelerate Energy at a cost of \$9.79 per metric million British Thermal Unit (MMBtu) while the second one will be supplied by Switzerland-based Gunvor at a cost of \$9.37 per MMBtu.

The other two shipments will be imported from Singapore-based Vitol-Asia, costing \$9.47, and \$9.24 per MMBtu respectively.

The government will get the gas at a cheaper rate than the previous shipments.

The country has been facing an acute gas crisis since October last year when a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) underwent maintenance work.

Since January, the government has imported seven cargoes of LNG — each has the capacity of 33.60 lakh MMBtu.

After the Russia-Ukraine war broke out, the government was able to purchase an LNG cargo for less than \$10 per MMBtu in February this year.

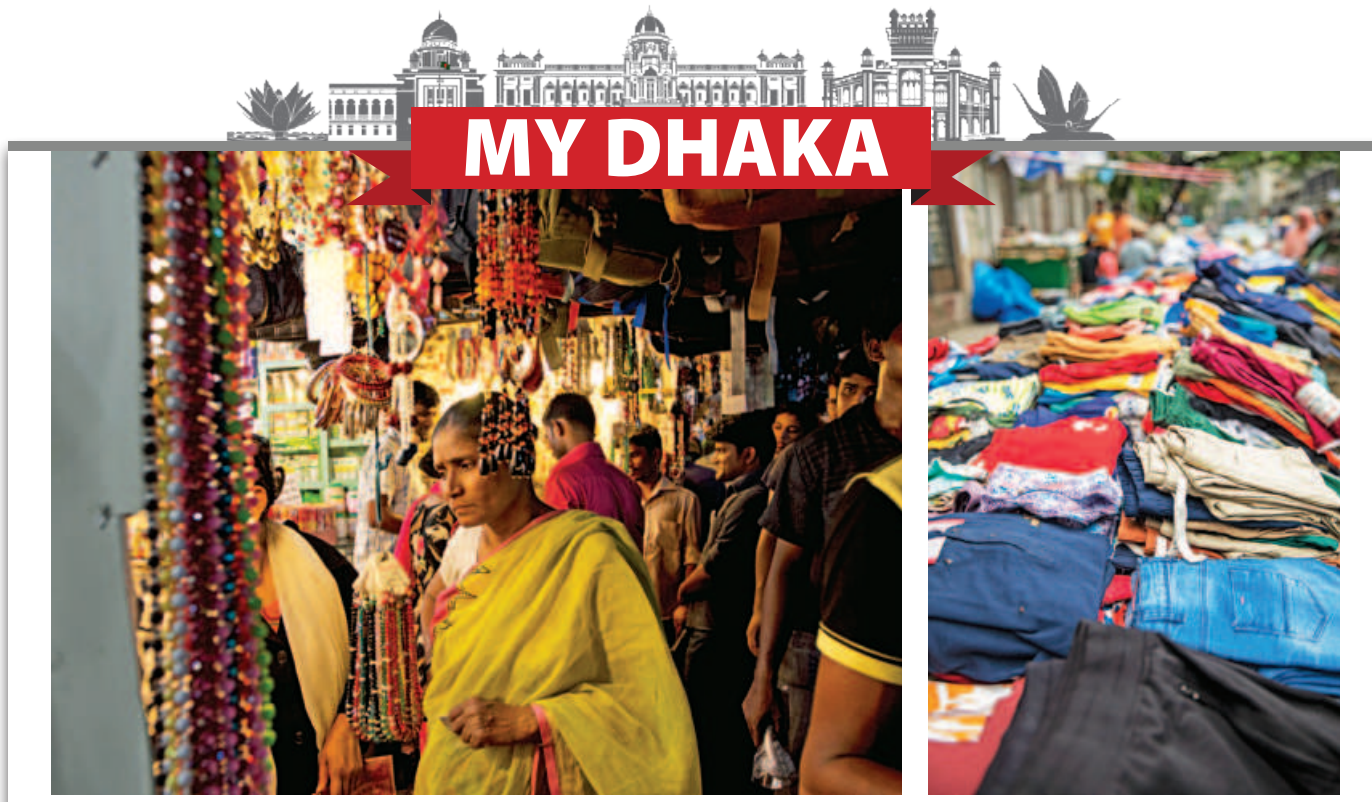
Country's two FSRUs have the capacity to supply around 1,000 million cubic feet of gas a day (mmcf) but they were supplying around 850 mmcf before October last year. As one FSRU went for maintenance work, the gas supply has come down to 500 mmcf.

Besides, the local gas production also dropped. The largest supplier — Bibiyana gas field — has the capacity to generate around 1,200mmcf of gas, but it can now produce around 1,000 to 1,050mmcf.

Also at yesterday's purchase meeting, three solar power plants were approved. The government will buy electricity from the plants for 20 years.

Rupsha plant in Khulna will be constructed by a joint venture of Energen Renewables (BD) Ltd and PWR; Rajnagar plant in Moulvibazar by a consortium of Thien vu Viet Nam New Energy Joint Stock Company and DreamFinder Ltd; and Goalanda plant in Rajbari will be built by another consortium of China Datang Overseas Investment Co Ltd and Engreen Engineering Ltd.

Each plant will be able to generate 100 megawatts of electricity and its unit price (kilowatt-hour) will be \$0.0988.



PHOTOS: STAR LIFESTYLE ARCHIVE

## When budget shopping meets style

**Budget shopping is the best form of retail therapy if you know exactly where to go. Especially for pre-Eid shopping — when you are unsure of what you want to buy for your family and friends yet you are eager to see what's new in the market — bargain basements are the places to be!**

RBR

The latest craze for city-dwellers is the cycle vans selling all kinds of things, from undergarments to cushion covers. I leave it up to you to broaden the spectrum of things you get in these footpath vans.

Lately, locals of the capital's Uttara have been flocking to these “van markets” to get a variety of products — unusual ceramic crockery, bed sheets, curtains, clothing, lovely Hermes cheat print silk scarves, fashionable jump suits, trendy costume jewellery, shoes, kitchenware, etc.

These underground and footpath markets mostly sell garments or ceramic factory rejects.

Vans stationed in Hawkers and Gawsia markets are sometimes better stocked than the shops inside. The range of products is mind-blowing, from beautiful jute cushion covers of export quality to all sorts of kitchen gadgets like bottle blenders and juicers. Children's nagras, ladies' fancy juttis, quartz studded hair pins, and clips — you hit upon all these and much more in footpath vans, provided you have the eye for it and the patience to ignore the mad rush.

The last Friday before Ramadan began, I braved the traffic and went to Chadni Chawk, Hawkers, and Gawsia shopping district, and was enjoying the “barketing” — a word the shopkeepers coined from “bargaining and marketing”. I loved the thriving market vibes before Eid and Ramadan. There are so many items I earmarked as gifts for friends and family.

I also did some “basement shopping” and was surprised to find Remi cotton and linen kurtis for less than Tk 500. These are made from fine local cotton fabric, adorned with laces and stones.

Thrift markets in Gulistan were always popular in Dhaka. It was the first market in town where you got second-hand foreign garments right after the war-torn years.

Now it is a busy low-cost market and the best place to buy gabardine, corduroy, cotton pants, and ready-to-wear coats for as less as Tk 500.

Gudara Ghat Road, opposite Navana Tower linking Gulshan and Badda, is also a great place for penny-pinching shopping. Rejected branded apparel from the RMG sector is sold here for a few hundred takas. Lanes running towards Banani on Kemal Ataturk Avenue have a few sought-after vans that do brisk business as well.

Budget shopping is very popular in Dhaka and each area has its designated clientele. The regulars know the shopkeepers and can strike great deals.

With just Tk 2,000, you can buy a bag full of trendy jumpsuits, tops, and fashionable trousers with perfect fit and cut. The “vanwallahs” or shopkeepers are eager to cater to their customers from all tiers of Dhaka society and you come out of these places a winner most of the time.



Dr Hossain Khan, deputy director and local point officer of the National Child Labour Survey-2022, presented both surveys' findings at the event.

Speaking as the chief guest, State Minister for Planning Md Shahiduzzaman Sarker said the data from both surveys will help the government adopt necessary plans and programmes to eliminate child labour by 2025.

Dr Shahnaz Arefin, secretary of the planning ministry's Statistics and Informatics Division; Tuomo Poutiainen, ILO country director, and Matt Cannell, deputy high commissioner and development director of British High Commission, among others spoke at the event, chaired by BBS Director Mohammed

## 1m children toil

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exclusion and violations of their rights as children, speakers at the event said.

The survey highlighted that child labourers earn a monthly average of Tk 6,675, but there are 2.01 million children involved in domestic work, mostly females, many of whom do not receive any wages. Data from the Establishment-Based Sector-Wise Working Children Survey-2023 revealed that of the five most hazardous sectors, 24,923 work in motor vehicle maintenance and repair; 5,281 in footwear manufacturing; 4,099 in iron and steel casting; 2,805 in personal and household goods repair; and 898 in fish, crustacean, and mollusc processing and preservation.

As per the survey, nearly two-thirds, or 64.3 percent, of child labourers involved in hazardous work reside in urban areas within the specified sectors. Across the five sectors, children work for an average of 9.4 hours per day. Around 20 percent are exposed to hazards such as fire, hot appliances, or dangerous electrical equipment; 31.1 percent are employed in occupations where breathing is restricted due to dust, fumes, or gases; and 14.8 percent work extended hours under the sun without break.

As per the survey, over half (51.4 percent) of establishments compensate child labourers with monthly wages of Tk 5,000 or below, while 28.7 percent pay wages of Tk 10,000 or less. Mohammad Saddam

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## 'No one feels good

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they did not take action because of the hostages' safety.

“The pirates seemed unfazed. They know they have the hostages.” Another hostage called his mother using a satellite phone around 4:40pm (Bangladesh time) and said the captors let the crew members go to their cabins and cook.

He also informed that the individuals who hijacked the ship left and another group took over.

“My son said he was fine and told me not to worry. He asked me to stay in touch with his employers,” the woman told The Daily Star.

Her son also informed that pirates may allow the hostages to stay in the cabins until the evening.

Another hostage contacted SR Shipping, the owner of the vessel, around 6:00pm and said everyone was fine, said Mizanul Islam, media adviser of KSRM Group, the parent company of SR Shipping.

“The pirates have reached their safe zone. They may contact us soon. We are also asking several third parties to contact the pirates, but it may take a few more days to get the first response from the pirates,” he said, adding that KSRM would take the steps necessary to negotiate with the pirates and ensure the crew members' safe return.

MV Abdullah was sailing from Maputo in Mozambique to AlHamriyah in the UAE with 58,000 tonnes of coal when it was hijacked.

At the foreign ministry yesterday, Rear Admiral (ret'd) Khurshed said the government was also in talks with several third-party groups.

“While incidents of hijacking are not uncommon, our ship was not in a high-risk zone. Nevertheless, the pirates managed to hijack it... Drawing on past experience, we are hopeful that we will succeed in getting the ship and the crew released safely. However, we can't say when it will happen,” he added.

The government is in constant contact with two European ships that are within 20 miles of MV Abdullah.

He added that it was decided at the inter-ministerial meeting that the situation will be resolved peacefully.

## Summit's clarification

Summit Corporation Limited yesterday issued a statement, saying that its Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) will depart from Singapore on March 19, and it will resume operations in Moheshkhali, Cox's Bazar before the end of this month.

The statement was issued in response to a report with the headline “Gas crisis till April at least: Summit's floating storage to take another month to finish maintenance work” published on the first page of The Daily Star on Thursday.

The report quoted a Facebook post by Ayesha Aziz Khan, the managing director and CEO of Summit Power International, which said the FSRU would “reach Moheshkhali by April”.

The Summit statement said the Facebook post has been corrected.

## Explosion at Tunisian gas depot injures 35

AFP, Tunis

An explosion yesterday at a gas depot near Tunisia's capital injured 35 people, four of them severely, civil protection services said.

“Around 6:15 am, a gas leak caused the explosion of gas cylinders in the premises of a distribution company in the oil field in Rades”, southeast of Tunis, civil protection spokesperson Moez Triaa told AFP.

All the victims were hospitalised after suffering first and second-degree burns while four of them were in intensive care, he added.

The energy ministry said in a statement that the fire at a gas depot of the Agil energy company in Rades was later brought under control.

## 16 victims in critical condition

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The fire broke out in a densely populated area in Mouchak Telirchala village in Gazipur's Kaliakair upazila around 5:45pm following a leak in a cooking gas cylinder.

A homeowner named Shafiqul Islam, was trying to install a gas cylinder in his house on Wednesday afternoon when he noticed a leak on the cylinder and threw it outside.

The gas spread across the street, where someone was using a stove. Coming in contact with the gas, the fire from the stove grew and spread, leaving the people nearby injured, witnesses said.

Of the 32 injured, six are at the intensive care unit (ICU) and two in high-dependency unit (HDUs).

According to the burn victim list, patients with burns covering 50-100 percent of their bodies are placed in the “black” category. The 16 critically injured patients from Gazipur fall in that category.

Among them, 30-year-old Monsur has suffered 100 percent burns, while 12 others have burns on at least 80 percent of their bodies, and three have 52-70 percent burns.

Based on the severity of the burns, the other categories are described as “red”, for burns covering 20-49 percent of the body, “yellow” for five-19 percent, and “green” for less than five percent.

Among the Gazipur victims, eight are categorised as “red”, five as “yellow”, and three as “green”.

“A burn patient is not out of danger until they recover and are able to go home,” Prof Samanta said.

He said 13 children are undergoing treatment for severe burns. Of them, seven are aged between three and 10 years and six between 11 and 18.

“At least 12 people suffered 80-90 percent burns on their bodies.”

A medical board has been formed

to treat the patients. “Advanced medical care will be ensured for Gazipur burn victims,” the minister said during a meeting of the medical board.

Meanwhile, a four-member probe committee was formed yesterday to investigate the fire incident and submit a report within three days, said Gazipur Fire Service and Civil Defence Deputy Director Abdullah Al Arefin.

AFM Nasim, officer-in-charge of Kaliakair Police Station, said legal action will be taken after those whose negligence caused the incident are identified.

**WAITING FOR THEIR LOVED ONES**

Nurjahan stood still with teary eyes and her gaze fixed on the ward where her mother, Kamala Khatun, fought for her life at the burn institute with 80 percent burns.

“My mother's condition isn't good at all. I don't know what fate holds for us.”

Suneka, her sister who stood in a corner, could not hold back her tears upon hearing the words.

Relatives of many others anxiously waited outside the Burn Institute's ICU, HDU, and Orange Unit.

Among them was Nasima Begum, whose husband Abdul Quddus, suffered 80 percent burns.

“My husband rushed to the scene to see what happened and was engulfed in flames. He somehow returned home and told me to get eggs from the fridge to put them on his burns. Then he lost consciousness,” she said as she recounted the traumatic event.

Abdul Rahim's son, Laden, suffered 85 percent burns.

“My son was caught in the fire. I dread to think of his condition. If anything happens to him, what will I do?”