



## Only eight industries to get new gas lines

### Others have to manage with LPG as per a forthcoming regulation

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is likely to stop new gas connections to industries save for eight "economically vital" ones under a forthcoming regulation.

The eight industries considered to be economically vital are: garment, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, agricultural products, ceramic, cement, steel and leather.

Only the "economically vital industries" that applied for new connections and did not get it until last year could get supply, as per the draft guideline on using liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) as an alternative fuel in industries.

The other industries seeking new connections will need to build LPG units as an alternate option to gas, according to the draft guideline, which is being formulated to "reduce the pressure on natural gas and to ensure uninterrupted energy supply by expanding multiple use of LPG".

Mahbubul Alam, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said: "If they want to stop new connections, then how will the small industries get bigger?"

There are other economically vital industries like the light engineering, food manufacturing etc, he said. "Then why will they not give emphasis to these industries?"

Besides, the LPG industry is import dependent.

Distributors	Total connections	Households	Industries
Titas	2,878,757	2,853,053	5,429
Karnaphuli	601,028	596,744	1,160
Bakhrabad	229,635	237,584	163
Paschimanchal	129,406	128,848	132
Sundarban	2,389	2,374	7
Jalalabad	221,142	219,485	130

"Our main focus should be local gas exploration. We should also remember that production costs will increase for using LPG," Alam added.

Such a decision will be a barrier for new entrepreneurs, said Mohammad Hatem, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"And fresh ideas are essential for furthering industrialisation."

Besides, if the difference in costs between piped gas and LPG is huge, small businesses will be in ruins, Hatem added.

Titas, the largest among the six gas distributors, has about 500 pending applications from industries for new connections. In the last five years, Titas only provided 150 new connections to industries.

The applications have been pending for long, said Titas officials on the condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak with media.

The energy division already formed a committee in January to sort out which applications will be approved for new connections.

Besides, the government has already announced that it will not provide

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Nine compartments of a Jamalpur-bound Bijoy Express train had derailed near the Hasanpur Railway station in Cumilla's Nangalkot area yesterday afternoon, leaving several hurt.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Chattogram delinked as train derails in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Rail services to and from Chattogram have remained suspended since a train derailed in Cumilla yesterday afternoon.

At least nine compartments of a Jamalpur-bound Bijoy Express train from Chattogram derailed near the Hasanpur Railway Station in Nangalkot upazila around 1:30pm, said Debasis Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Nangalkot Police Station, adding that around 10-12 people were injured.

Ismail Hossain, Nangalkot's upazila nirbahi officer, said that four of the injured suffered major injuries.

All four are under treatment.

Liakot Ali Khan, sub-SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## INSTIGATING ABONTIKA'S SUICIDE JnU student, asst proctor 'partly involved'

### DMP says after preliminary probe

STAR REPORT

Police have found evidence of partial involvement of Jagannath University student Raihan Siddique Amman and Assistant Proctor Din Islam in instigating the suicide of law student Fairuz Sadaf Abontika.

Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, at a press briefing in the DMP Media Centre yesterday, said, "During primary interrogation, we have found the arrestees' partial involvement in the incident.

"However, it can't be conclusively said that all allegations align with the current evidence. But initially, it seems to us that there is truth [to the allegations]."

He also said, "Further investigation will unveil the



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## JAN 7 ELECTION Violence, pre-polls environ undermined its quality

### Says NDI-IRI report

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The quality of the January 7 election in Bangladesh was undermined by incidents of state, ruling party and opposition violence, said the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI).

The pre election environment -- which was characterised by zero-sum politics, violence among political actors, contracting civic space and worsening freedoms of expression and association -- also

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## 3.77cr suffered food insecurity last year

### Finds BBS survey

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Around 3.77 crore people experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in 2023, according to a survey by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Of them, 14.77 lakh or 0.87 percent people experienced severe food insecurity, finds the report titled "Food Security Statistics 2023".

This implies a high probability of reduced food intake, and it can lead to severe forms of undernutrition, it observes.

The survey was conducted among 29,760 households across the country in June last year.

The respondents were asked whether they had skipped at least one meal anytime in the previous 12 months because they could not afford it. Over 4.30 percent said they had.

Over 1.50 percent of the people said they went hungry for an entire day while three percent said they suffered hunger once or twice every month.

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