



Stop malicious attempts to increase gas, electricity prices



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During the tenure of the previous government, unjustified and irrational cost increases in various segments of energy supply chain continued for more than 15 years, leading to a persistent financial deficit in this sector. The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) made adjustments by increasing subsidies and tariffs. As a result, BERC lost its independence and neutrality as a regulatory body, depriving consumers of fair energy access and violating their rights.

Under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010, investments in the power and energy sector continued without competition, further facilitating the predatory cost in energy supply increases. In 2023, an amendment (Section 34A) added to Section 34 of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 transferred the authority to set all energy tariffs to the Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources. Additionally, the following clause was inserted, "Until regulations are formulated by the Commission, the government may determine, revise, or adjust tariffs through a notification in the official Gazette."

Subsequently, the ministry frequently raised energy tariffs and adjusted the predatory costs, making the cost of living unbearable for the consumers and pushing the country's energy security into a severe crisis. As a result, people's fundamental rights were threatened. No significant improvement has been made to the situation yet.

Although BERC was established in 2003 as an independent regulatory body to ensure transparency in energy management, pricing, and consumer interest protection, it totally failed to exercise its power and authority. According to Section 22 of the law, BERC had the power to: i) determine efficiency and standard of the machinery and appliances of the institutions, using energy and to ensure through energy audit the verification, monitoring, analysis of the energy and the economy use and enhancement of the efficiency of the use of energy; ii) approve schemes on the basis of overall programme of the licensee and to make decision in this regard taking into consideration the load forecast and financial status; iii) extend cooperation and advice to the government, if necessary, regarding electricity generation, transmission, marketing, supply distribution, and storage of energy; iv) resolve disputes between licensees, and between licensees and consumers, and refer those to arbitration if necessary; and v) ensure appropriate remedy for consumer disputes, dishonest business practices or monopoly.

But BERC, acting as a subservient entity of the government, has only been involved in tariff determination over the past 15 years. It has refrained from engaging in the activities outlined in Section 22, meaning it has remained inactive. It

has also been inactive in exercising its powers. There has been no change in this situation till date.

Furthermore, the key considerations under Section 34 of the applicable law for determining energy tariffs are: i) harmonising the tariff with the costs of production, transmission, marketing, distribution, supply, and storage of energy; ii) efficiency, least cost, excellent service, excellent investment; iii) consumers' interest; iv) the commission shall determine tariff after giving hearing to licensees and others who have interest in it; and v) tariff determined by the commission shall not be revised more than once in a fiscal year, unless there is change in the prices of energy including any

repealed through an ordinance, Sections 2(b) and 2(c) were added to legally protect the injustices and criminal activities that were carried out under the repealed law. This deceived the public and reinforced the same predatory practices, proving that neither the government nor BERC has changed its stance.

The proposals by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) for energy and electricity sector reforms, aimed at bringing down energy prices to a fair and reasonable level, have not been accepted. BERC has taken no initiatives to reduce predatory costs and tariffs. It has not provided any recommendations to the government either.

Instead, BERC's recently issued public notice reveals that a hearing has been scheduled for February 26, 2025, regarding the proposed increase in gas prices for industrial and captive power consumers under the proposal of Petrobangla and various gas distribution companies like Titas, Bakhrabad, Jalalabad, Pashchimanchal, Sundarban, and Karnaphuli. This indicates an impending increase in gas prices,

It is regrettable that, even after the July uprising and the change of government, no improvement has been made in this sector. Neither the ministry nor BERC has introduced any qualitative improvement. After the fall of the Awami League government, the interim government repealed Section 34A, which was specially added to the BERC Act. However, the sentence in the law stating, '... until the Commission formulates regulations, the government may determine, revise, or adjust tariffs through a notification in the government gazette,' was not repealed.

other changes.

Over the past 15 years, if the aforementioned considerations had been taken into account in tariff determination, the financial deficit in the energy sector could have been controlled. The need to frequently increase energy prices each year to manage subsidies would not have arisen, and there would have been no need to amend Subsection 34(5) of the law. The existing annual deficit in gas would not have reached Tk 20,000 crore, and Tk 42,000 crore in electricity. Gas prices would not have even risen to Tk 30 per unit. If the current BERC had properly considered these factors instead of following its predecessors, it would not need to consider the proposal to raise the gas price from Tk 30 to Tk 75.

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Furthermore, although the Special Provision Act, 2010 was

with electricity prices likely to follow.

Reports indicate that the current financial deficit in the gas sector is around Tk 20,000 crore per year, and there is a proposal to increase the price of gas used in industrial and captive power generation from Tk 30 to Tk 75. This proposal is in conflict with Sections 22 and 34 of the BERC Act, as well as the ideals of the July uprising.

In light of this, CAB, on behalf of consumers, urgently requested BERC in a letter dated February 13, 2025 to suspend the scheduled hearing and any subsequent actions regarding the proposed gas price hike until the following proposals are adopted and implemented: i) BERC must determine the total amount of unjust, irrational, predatory costs that have been adjusted in the supply of electricity, liquid fuel, coal, natural gas, LNG, LPG, solar and wind power from 2010 to 2024 under the previous government; ii) BERC must assess how much the cost of electricity and primary energy, as well as subsidies, can be reduced by eliminating predatory costs and profits while reducing government revenue; iii) a tribunal must be formed under the BERC Act, led by a retired Supreme Court judge, to prosecute energy criminals; and (iv) to ensure energy justice and protect energy rights, the BERC Act, 2003 must be reformed by a committee comprising stakeholder representatives.

Reduce the prices of oil, gas, and electricity; bring relief to the people.

Bangladesh must discard its archaic foreign policy



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The mass uprising of July-August 2024 has not only shaken Bangladesh's internal political structure, but also brought a monumental shift in its foreign policy and diplomatic approach. One significant outcome has been the government's newfound ability to distinguish between its true allies and adversaries in the international arena. This signifies a break from past submissive policies, marking a new era in Bangladesh's diplomacy—one that prioritises national dignity, self-respect, and equal status on the global stage.

For decades, Bangladesh followed the policy of "friendship to all, malice to none," a principle inherited from its early years of independence. However, the events of 2024 have exposed the weaknesses of this antiquated dogma.

A sovereign nation cannot afford to extend equal friendship to all while ignoring the power dynamics and self-interest that define global politics. Instead, Bangladesh must embrace a pragmatic and strategic foreign policy that acknowledges global realities, while serving its own interests.

The government's recent stance reflects a break from dependency-based diplomacy.

Despite knowing that India will not support its current leadership, the government has declared its intent to rely on the people rather than foreign powers. This newfound assertiveness signals a shift towards an independent and self-respecting approach, aligning foreign policy with the aspirations of its citizens rather than external pressures.

However, breaking free from a redundant foreign policy is not a new phenomenon; many nations have recalibrated their diplomatic strategies. China embraced economic openness in 1978, Turkey diversified alliances in the 2000s, and France asserted sovereignty in 1966. Yet, Bangladesh's previous regime long adhered to outdated policies, resisting necessary shifts in global engagement.

It prioritised select alliances over national interest and maintained a one-dimensional approach, compromising sovereignty and economic potential. This failure to modernise left Bangladesh diplomatically weak and economically dependent, hindering progress.

However, the previous regime's foreign policy was not merely about "friendship to all"—it extended "extra friendship" to certain countries, often at the cost of Bangladesh's sovereignty. A clear

example of this was seen in transit and transhipment agreements with India. Economists and pro-government analysts promoted the idea that Bangladesh would achieve economic prosperity similar to Singapore through these arrangements.

However, rather than benefiting from a win-win scenario, Bangladesh found itself trapped in one-sided agreements where its interests were repeatedly undermined. This realisation, fuelled by public sentiments in the wake of the mass uprising, has led to a re-evaluation of diplomatic engagements. Moving forward, Bangladesh must engage only with those who respect its sovereignty, and distance or insulate itself from those who exploit its resources under the guise of cooperation.

A nation's foreign policy should be a reflection of its people's aspirations. For Bangladesh, these aspirations are deeply rooted in the Liberation War of 1971, which was fundamentally a struggle for self-respect and human dignity. The uprising of 2024 has reignited these values, demanding that Bangladesh's diplomatic strategies uphold the same principles that guided its fight for independence.

First, human dignity must be a core principle in foreign relations. Bangladeshis are a major labour force across the globe, and their rights and dignity abroad must be a priority in diplomatic negotiations. Without a strong foreign policy that protects Bangladeshi citizens internationally, the nation will fail to assert itself as a dignified global player.

Also, the legal protection, fair wages, and humane treatment of the growing Bangladeshi diaspora seeking opportunities abroad must be ensured, making them an integral part of foreign agreements. If Bangladesh does not demand equal respect on the global stage, its citizens will continue to face discrimination and exploitation abroad.

This shift marks a significant departure from the submissive policies of previous administrations which often prioritised economic concessions over national pride. The government's new approach emphasises equal status, ensuring that Bangladesh is not treated as a subordinate in global negotiations.

Another key transformation in Bangladesh's foreign policy is the pursuit of equal dignity among nations. This principle dictates that Bangladesh, regardless of its economic or geopolitical stature, must be treated as an equal partner in international relations.

The United Nations Charter guarantees equal dignity to all nations, including Bangladesh, ensuring that no country, regardless of its size or economic power, is treated as inferior in international relations. Article 1(2) affirms the right of all peoples to self-determination and equal participation in global affairs, reinforcing that Bangladesh has the same standing as any other nation.

Similarly, Article 2(1) upholds the sovereign equality of all UN member states, meaning Bangladesh has the right to be treated as an equal partner in diplomacy, trade, and negotiations.

The UN Charter gives Bangladesh the legal and moral foundation to demand equal treatment, ensuring that it engages with the world on its own terms. This shift is not an act of defiance but a rightful alignment with international law, allowing Bangladesh to emerge as a respected and independent voice in global affairs.

Therefore, Bangladesh must reject policies that position it as a dependent state. Just as countries like Belarus, Chile, Mexico, and Pakistan assert their sovereignty, Bangladesh must demand the same level of respect. This shift in policy requires a strong leadership stance, one that refuses to bow to international coercion and instead negotiates from a position of strength. For that, sustainable diplomatic strategy is needed which will ensure that Bangladesh remains resilient against external pressures while steadily strengthening its global influence.

Historically, Bangladesh has been positioned as a "soft state", easily manipulated by regional and global powers. The uprising of 2024 has fuelled a new confidence, pushing the nation to adopt a bargaining stance rather than a submissive one. By shifting from reactive diplomacy to proactive engagement, Bangladesh can strengthen its democracy and economic standing without compromising its values.

The July-August uprising has redefined Bangladesh's approach to governance and diplomacy. The movement has not only exposed internal injustices but also highlighted the flaws of Bangladesh's submissive foreign policy. As the country moves forward, the following principles must guide its diplomatic path: i) self-respect over subordination; ii) human dignity beyond borders; iii) equal status among nations; iv) sovereignty above external influence; and v) a sustainable, assertive approach to foreign policy.

The era of passive foreign policy is over—a new Bangladesh is emerging, and it refuses to be dictated by external forces and instead asserts itself as an equal and sovereign player on the global stage.

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Invitation For e-Tender

For financial year 2024-2025, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of:

SL	Tender ID No & Reference No	Description of goods	Last selling Date & Time	Closing/ Opening Date & Time
1.	1079202, RABHQ/CPS/2024-2025/3258105/280 Date:23-02-2025	Repairing and Maintenance of Equipment	11-Mar-2025 10:00	11-Mar-2025 12:00
2.	1079153, RABHQ/CPS/2024-2025/3258116/279 Date:23-02-2025	Repairing & Procurement of PABX Equipment and other Accessories	11-Mar-2025 10:00	11-Mar-2025 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Tenderer having clarity requirements are requested to contact at 01777-720118 (Senior Assistant Director, Central Procurement Section).

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