



"Everyone knows it is Russia alone that wants this war... showing its scorn for human life, international law and diplomatic efforts made by President Trump."

French President Emmanuel Macron on Ukraine war

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damages crops
in Chattogram

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strike Gaza
hospital

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The law is blind,
but so are the
people

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A confluence
of nature and
culture

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33% hike in gas tariff for new industries

Businesses, consumer rights groups slam the move

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government has set new gas tariffs for the industrial sector, hiking the price by 33 percent for new units, despite objections from businesses and consumer rights organisations.

According to the new rates announced by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), upcoming industries must pay at this new rate, while the existing units that use more than their sanctioned load will have to pay at the new rate for the excess consumption.

On the other hand, plants that got primary approval for connections but have yet to start their operation will have to pay 50 percent of their bills at the existing rate and the rest of their sanctioned load at the new rate.

The latest rates mean new industrial connections will be charged Tk 40 per cubic metre, up from Tk 30.

Similarly, new captive users will have to pay Tk 42 per cubic metre, up from Tk 31.5. Captive gas consumers

GAS PRICE SHOCK FOR INDUSTRIES

GAS PRICE TK/PER CUBIC METRE	EXISTING RATE	NEW RATE
Industries	30	40
Captive	31.5	42

- ⌚ New rate for new connections
- ⌚ Existing connections to be charged existing rate for sanctioned load
- ⌚ Existing rate to be charged for half the sanctioned load for approved connections

are entities that have their own gas-powered plants to produce electricity primarily for their own use.

The gas distributor companies had proposed that the tariff for new industries be raised by more than 150 percent, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said while announcing the new rates.

"But it would be tough [for them] to bear at the moment," he said, adding that the new prices were set after getting inputs from all stakeholders.

The BERC held a public hearing on February 26 on the proposal from the distributors to set gas prices for the new industries based on the actual cost of LNG imports.

Most of the stakeholders, including businesses and consumer rights bodies, opposed the proposal, saying it was illogical.

The Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) staged a human chain against the proposed hike, arguing that raising gas prices would stifle new investment, hinder job creation, disrupt exports and severely impact the economy.

Bangladesh has ample gas reserves, but the authorities have never taken the initiative to drill new wells, said Shawkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, one of the largest industrial gas consumers.

"Instead, they have become dependent on LNG imports,

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MAGURA RAPE Main accused charged with murder

STAR REPORT

A month after the death of the eight-year-old girl, who was brutally raped while visiting her sister's in-laws in Magura, police have pressed murder charges against the main accused.

The horrifying crime sent shockwaves across the nation, with many demanding that the government expedite justice for rape victims and reform laws related to the safety of women and children.

The charge sheet, which accused three others of concealing information and intimidation, came a month after her death at Dhaka's Combined Military Hospital (CMH), where she lost a week-long battle for her life.

"We have submitted the charge sheet to Magura Judicial Magistrate Court pressing charges against four persons," Inspector (investigation) of Magura

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RACING AGAINST THE STORM... Farmers in Khulna are working tirelessly to harvest their ripe Boro paddy as fast as possible, worried they might get damaged by the nor'wester storms common during the Bangla month of Baishakh. The photo was taken from Pashchim Bilpabla area in Dumuria upazila. Related story on page 5.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

LAST-MINUTE PREP... Dhaka University's former fine arts students yesterday put the final strokes on traditional cloth-based scroll paintings known as "Patachitra". These artworks portray motifs inspired by Bangladesh's rural life, history, mythology, and folklore. Five of these expansive 20-foot artworks will be carried overhead as part of today's grand procession

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS Most parties want changes in basic principles, preamble

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Perceived to be an embodiment of the July uprising, the interim government was empowered with an overwhelming mandate for reforms. There is a firm expectation that this government would help bring about a state befitting the aspirations of millions who had taken to the streets in July. As such, constitutional reforms have become the centrepiece of the incumbent's efforts. Prior to the Consensus Commission's meetings, political parties came up with their proposals for constitutional reforms.

BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and 14 other political parties and platforms sought changes to the basic principles of the constitution. Of them, 15 called for revisions to the preamble, and 11 advocated for changes to both the basic principles and the preamble.

According to the proposals to the Constitution Reform Commission, the 16 parties and platforms that sought changes to the basic principles include BNP, Jamaat,

Jamaat-e-Islami and 14 other political parties and platforms sought changes to the basic principles of the constitution. Of them, 15 called for revisions to the preamble, and 11 advocated for changes to both the basic principles and the preamble.

Islam Andolan Bangladesh, Gono Odhikar Parishad (ex-Ducsu VP Nur faction), Bhashani Anusari Parishad, Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM), 12-party alliance, Khelafat Majlis, Ganosamhati Andolon, AB Party, Bangladesher Samantantri Dal, Jatiya Nagorik Committee, and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

Fifteen parties that sought changes to the preamble are BNP, Jamaat, Rastro Sangskar Andolon, Bangladesh Jashod, Labour Party, 12-party alliance, Ganosamhati Andolon, CPB, Jatiya Nagorik Committee, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlis, AB Party, Jatiya Gano Front, NDM, and Bangladesh Kalyan party.

PROPOSALS ON PREAMBLE
BNP wants to keep "Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-Ar-Rahim" along with the Bangla text.

The party wants the preamble to read how it was prior to the 15th amendment, which was: "We, the people of Bangladesh, having proclaimed our independence on the 26th day of March 1971 and through [a historic war for national independence], established the independent, sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh..."

The 15th amendment changed this sentence to read "national liberation" instead of "national independence" in brackets, which had been introduced to the preamble through the fifth

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MEGHNA ALAM'S DETENTION

Due process was not followed

Says law adviser; HC asks why her detention shouldn't be declared illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of public outrage, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday said the way model Meghna Alam was detained was not right.

The High Court also questioned the legality of Meghna's 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act.

On Saturday, the chief of the DMP's Detective Branch, which detained her from her home, was removed from his post.

These developments come as legal experts and rights groups raise concerns over the way she was picked up and how a late-night court hearing was held more than 24 hours after her detention.

They also term the Special Powers Act a draconian legislation and call for its abolition.

"There are some allegations against Meghna; but the process involving her arrest was not right," Prof Asif told a press briefing at the Secretariat.

"Her detention was approved by the home ministry. A meeting of senior government officials was held in this

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Power prices not going up anytime soon

Finance ministry informs visiting IMF mission

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The subsidy allocation for the power sector is not going down anytime soon as the interim government does not plan to increase electricity prices on inflationary fears.

The disclosure was made during a meeting between the finance ministry and the visiting mission of the International Monetary Fund. The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the discussion.

The IMF mission arrived in Dhaka on April 6 on a 12-day visit to review Bangladesh's progress against various conditions before releasing the fourth and fifth tranches of the \$4.7 billion loan.

A final meeting on this -- involving the finance ministry and the Bangladesh Bank -- will take place tomorrow.

The IMF has been concerned about Bangladesh's increasing subsidy allocation for the power sector for long as they deem it to be an inequitable distribution of scarce state resources.

Over the past few days, the visiting mission held discussions with several relevant ministries and departments to learn whether the government would increase electricity prices and whether it would allocate more funds for power sector subsidy.

This fiscal year, Tk 40,000 crore has been allocated as power sector subsidy, which was later revised upwards to Tk 62,000 crore, including arrears.

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