



Consumers stare at higher power bills

Tariff hikes, slab restructuring may sharply raise electricity prices

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Electricity consumers are set to face higher bills as the government considers combining tariff hikes with the restructuring of residential billing slabs in a move that could sharply raise costs for middle-range users.

The Power Development Board (PDB) has proposed increasing wholesale prices by 17-21 percent, citing rising fuel import costs, capacity charges for idle plants, and mounting operational losses of distributors.

All six distribution companies, along with the transmission operator, have submitted proposals to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), seeking retail tariff hikes of 15-29 percent across different slabs.

If approved, the changes would affect most of the country's 4.95 crore electricity customers, already burdened by higher fuel oil, LPG, and commodity prices.

The distributors together lost Tk 2,638 crore in FY2024-25 under the current tariff structure and project losses exceeding Tk 3,800 crore in FY26 without adjustments. Most of them sought a revision of pricing to reduce the gap, effective from June 1.

PRICE HIKE PROPOSALS

Wholesale: **17-21%**

Retail: **15-29%**

PDB REASONING FOR HIKE

Rising fuel import expenses

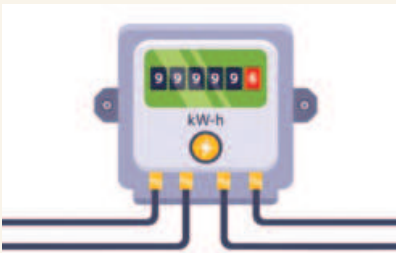
Idle power plant capacity costs

Mounting operational losses

DISTRIBUTORS' LOSS

6 state-owned power distributors incurred losses of around Tk 2,638cr in FY25

Figure would cross Tk 3,800cr in FY26



PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED HIKEs MAY 20-21



The distributors do not have the authority to propose such changes in the slab structure. PDB may propose tariff adjustments, but it cannot dictate how the deficits should be recovered.

PROF M SHAMSUL ALAM
Energy adviser to Consumers Association of Bangladesh

Documents reviewed by The Daily Star show they want to pass not only higher wholesale and transmission costs but also their own operational expenditures and accumulated deficits to end users.

Public hearings on the wholesale and retail tariff proposals are scheduled for May 20 and 21 at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium in Dhaka.

SLAB RESTRUCTURING

PDB's proposal includes redefining residential slabs, which could significantly increase bills for lower-middle and middle-income households consuming up to 200 kilowatt-hours (kWh) monthly.

Currently, lifeline users consuming up to 50 kWh and those using up to 75 kWh enjoy lower rates. Consumers using up to 200 units also enjoy the lower rate for the first 75 kWh.

PDB now seeks to abolish that benefit for the consumers using up to 200 units. This means a household consuming 76-200 kWh would pay the higher rate for all usage; there will be no lower rate for them for the first 75 kWh.

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Bangladesh, US sign deal on energy cooperation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the US have formally signed a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation in the energy sector, aiming to enhance Bangladesh's long-term energy security.

The MoU will facilitate capacity building, exchange of knowledge and expertise, and studies on oil, gas, geothermal and bioenergy between the two countries. It will also help Bangladesh import US LNG, LPG and other energy products at affordable prices.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and US Energy Secretary Chris Wright signed the MoU at the Department of Energy in Washington, DC, on Thursday, according to a statement issued by the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC yesterday.

The MoU was signed at a time when many countries,

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Farmers thresh and clean freshly harvested paddy in their courtyards in the Rajabari area of Godagari upazila, Rajshahi, yesterday. This season, the Barind highlands have reported bumper yields of Boro varieties BR-28 and Jeera.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN



Amid sweltering heat, workers scoop and bag salt at a warehouse in Chattogram's Sadarghat. Ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, demand for salt has surged, as the mineral is essential for preserving the rawhide of sacrificial animals. Traders said adverse weather has reduced production, driving prices up by about Tk 200 per sack to Tk 950.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

US-CHINA SUMMIT IN BEIJING 'No breakthroughs' as Trump ends trip

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump left China yesterday without major breakthroughs on trade or tangible help from Beijing to end the Iran war, despite spending two days praising his host, Xi Jinping.

Trump's visit to America's main strategic and economic rival – the first by a US president since his own trip in 2017 – aimed to deliver tangible results to boost his sagging approval

flashpoints.

Trump said Xi had agreed to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz and buy Boeing jets, American oil and soybeans.

But there were no formal announcements, and China's foreign ministry would neither confirm nor deny Trump's claims when asked yesterday afternoon.

The guarded Chinese response reflected the broader tone of the summit, where Trump's overtures to Xi – whom he called a "great

Details scarce as Trump hails 'fantastic trade deals'

US leader says 'made no commitment' to Xi on Taiwan

Boeing shares slump after orders missed expectations

Trump says he did not discuss tariffs with Xi

ratings ahead of the midterm elections.

The summit featured elaborate pageantry, from goose-stepping soldiers to tours of a secret garden, but behind closed doors Xi warned Trump that mishandling Taiwan, China's top concern, could spiral into conflict.

Trump arrived in Beijing seeking deals in sectors including agriculture, aviation, rare earths and artificial intelligence, while trying to contain tensions in several geopolitical

leader" and "friend" – were met with more restrained language from Beijing.

Still, Trump said yesterday that "a lot of good" had come from the trip.

"We've made some fantastic trade deals, great for both countries," he said after walking with Xi among the rosebushes of Zhongnanhai, the central leadership compound beside Beijing's Forbidden City.

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Prices of essentials rise ahead of Eid

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of key daily essentials, including egg, vegetables, meat and fish, have risen sharply in Dhaka's kitchen markets, putting pressure on consumers' pockets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Traders attributed the latest spike to seasonal rain, supply shortages, and growing Eid demand.

While visiting several retail and wholesale markets, including Shewrapara, Kazipara, Senpara, Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, and Mirpur-1, this correspondent yesterday found that prices of many daily essentials have continued to climb. Egg, vegetables, and spices are among the items with the steepest price hikes.

A dozen eggs were selling for Tk 150 in most kitchen markets, up from Tk 135-140 per dozen just a week ago.

Consumers said egg price started to increase after Ramadan and has been going up gradually since then.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ahmed Hossain, who works at a private organisation, said, "I became frustrated with the current price of a dozen eggs at a market in Mohammadpur. It was Tk 150, whereas it was Tk 130 only a couple of days ago."

Chicken prices, however, were comparatively stable. Broiler chicken was selling for Tk 170-180 per kg yesterday, while Sonali chicken was priced between Tk 330 and Tk 350.

Over the past week, consumers have been paying at least Tk 10 more per kg for onions. Local onions cost Tk 45-50 a kg yesterday, which was Tk 35-40 a week ago.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Hakim, a spice trader at Mirpur kitchen market, said wholesale prices went up sharply in recent days. "Earlier, we bought onions at Tk 30 a kg and sold them at Tk 33-35. Now we are buying them at Tk 40-42 a kg."

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Measles deaths climb to 451

Experts urge early screening, stronger vaccination drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twelve more children died of measles and measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of confirmed and suspected measles deaths to 451.

Of the 12 deaths, four were confirmed measles cases, while the remaining eight children died with symptoms of the disease, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the four latest fatalities, the number of confirmed measles deaths rose to 74. The total number of suspected measles deaths rose to 377 after eight more such deaths were reported during the same period.

Of the confirmed deaths, two were from Dhaka division and one each from Chattogram and Barisal divisions.

Of the suspected deaths, three each were from Dhaka and Chattogram divisions, and one each from Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions.

During the same period, the DGHS reported 111 new confirmed measles cases.

A total of 1,192 patients came to hospitals with

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12 more children die of measles, symptoms in 24 hours

Confirmed deaths so far 74; suspected 377