

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 1.08%	▲ 1.12%	\$1,842.19	\$68.71	▲ 0.09%	▲ 2.32%	▼ 2.18%	▲ 1.77%	BUY TK 83.95	100.88	117.50	12.80
5,813.16	10,156.40	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	48,732.55	28,084.47	3,055.02	3,490.38	SELL TK 84.95	104.68	121.30	13.46



Star BUSINESS

DHAKA MONDAY MAY 17, 2021, JAISHTHA 3, 1428 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

Banking stocks suffer despite higher dividends

AHSAN HABIB

Most banks are announcing higher dividends for 2020 than a year ago although they were plagued by the coronavirus pandemic for most of the year and had to do with a lower interest rate regime.

However, this could do little to enable banking stocks to attract investors as apprehensions prevail over the asset quality and a likely increase in non-performing loans, according to analysts.

So, the prices of these stocks have stayed relatively low in context to all the sectors in the market.

Among the 27 listed banks, 10 declared higher dividends, 11 the same, and seven lower.

Pubali Bank Managing Director Md Abdul Halim Chowdhury said the stock market was in a better position last year that positively impacted their profits.

AT A GLANCE

Number of listed banks **31**

27 banks announced dividends

10 banks saw dividends rise

Dividends unchanged for **11**

Declined for **7**

When the market did turn bullish, banks generated higher profits and had to keep a reduced amount in provisioning in the portfolio compared to that a year earlier, he said.

"So, our profits were impacted positively in two ways," he said.

The Bangladesh Bank also ordered banks not to classify loans in 2020. As a result, lenders did not require to set aside a higher amount of funds in provisioning.

READ MORE ON B3



Boro output to decline

US Dept of Agriculture says, but Bangladesh's DAE refutes

SOHEL PARVEZ

The production of Boro rice may decline by 1.5 per cent year-on-year to 1.90 crore tonnes in the current harvesting season because of the recent heatwave and pests attacks, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

As a result of the heat, key industry contacts believe it may be difficult for Bangladesh to achieve the target of producing 2.05 crore tonnes of the grain this year, said the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) in its report released last week.

The agriculture ministry, however, expects that the yield would go past two crore tonnes during this year's harvest, up from the previous year's 1.96 crore tonnes estimated by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The USDA had estimated Boro output at 1.93 crore tonnes the previous season.

Boro accounts for nearly 55 per cent of annual rice production, and farmers began harvesting the crop in late April.

The FAS Dhaka contacted Boro rice farmers from various parts of Bangladesh, and the farmers reported an expectation of a bumper crop this year.

"Though, some farmers reported damage caused by a short heatwave in the first week of April," the report said, adding that the agriculture ministry was in the process of estimating the



Farmers harvest Boro paddy from a field in Tangail's Kalihati upazila recently.

STAR

full extent of the production loss caused by the heat.

Last week, the ministry said the heatwave damaged nearly 100,000 tonnes of Boro rice.

The USDA's estimate of acreage of Boro is also lower than the Department of Agricultural Extension's (DAE's) forecast.

The US agency said farmers cultivated the paddy on 47 lakh hectares this season. The DAE put

the number at 48.83 lakh hectares.

DAE Director General Md Asadullah disagreed with the production forecast and estimate of the Boro rice area.

"Their [the USDA] estimate is not realistic. The yield is going to increase a lot this year, and we think the overall production will be no less than two crore tonnes."

Because of the higher prices of rice in the domestic market, a

section of farmers grew Boro paddy on the land they cultivated wheat, maize and mustard earlier.

"We also saw an increased acreage of hybrid rice. Overall, the acreage has expanded," said Asadullah.

The USDA forecast a 1.3 per cent increase in the total rice area to 1.16 crore hectares in the marketing year (May-April) of 2021-22.

READ MORE ON B3

Health division spends only 26pc of ADP outlay

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite giving special focus on the health sector, the government could implement only 26 per cent of the sector's Annual Development Programme in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year.

Out of the Tk 11,979 crore allocation against 53 projects, the Health Services Division could spend only Tk 3,050 crore during the July-April period.

Most of the projects were taken for health infrastructure development projects.

Of the 53, two coronavirus-related projects involving Tk 2,492 crore were taken in April 2020.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) gave \$100 million each for the two projects.

The government could spend only \$20 million of the ADB fund until April this year and \$37 million of the World Bank fund until March, according to the officials of the Economic Relations Division.

The change of a project director, the director general of the health services division and a health secretary in the last one year also played a role in slowing down the implementation rate, according to a planning ministry official.

READ MORE ON B3



A laidback holiday mood is apparently prevailing along this lane at Shahjahanpur in the capital with its shops yet to open two days past Eid-ul-Fitr. The photo was taken yesterday around 10:00am.

ANISUR RAHMAN

Banks can't appoint former MDs as independent directors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banks cannot appoint their former managing directors as independent directors at their respective board as per the provisions of the Banking Companies Act 1991, Bangladesh Bank (BB) said last week.

"Any regular or contractual officials of a bank will not be allowed to act as independent directors of the lender's board under any circumstances," the central bank said in a circular.

Banks appoint managing directors (MDs) on a contractual basis.

The BB has taken the move after a number of banks had appointed their former officials as independent directors at their boards.

The Banking Companies Act has barred banks from appointing an individual as an independent director of the lender's board if there is any possibility of conflict of interest between the lender and the person in the future.

Despite that, a number of banks have continued to breach the rule.

The central bank cited the banking companies law and said a person, who had an interest in a bank in the past and has at present, cannot be appointed as an independent director.

READ MORE ON B3

Banking hour 10am to 2pm until May 23

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday instructed lenders to continue their limited banking operations until May 23.

The central bank took the decision after the government extended the nationwide restrictions on public movement until May 23 to contain the second wave of Covid-19 infections.

Clients will be able to enjoy banking services from 10am to 2pm during this time, according to a notice of Bangladesh Bank.

Besides, the branches will remain open until 3:30pm to complete their regular procedures.

In the notice, the central bank, however, has not given any indication on the alternate-day duty rosters for employees.

Banks have been following the rostering system for their employees since April 14 as per the instructions of the central bank and the government.

READ MORE ON B3

Stock index crosses 5,800 after 4 months

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The benchmark index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) went past 5,800 yesterday after around four months thanks to increased participation of investors.

The DSEX rose 62 points, or 1.08 per cent, to end the day at 5,813 points.

The index has been rising for the last couple of days because of the higher participation of investors in a buoyant mood, according to market analysts.

However, turnover, an important indicator of the stock market, plunged 2.4 per cent to Tk 1,418 crore.

Advent Pharma topped the gainers' list with a 10 per cent rise followed by Nurani Dyeing & Sweater, Shurwid Industries,

Tung Hai Knitting and Dyeing and Index Agro Industries.

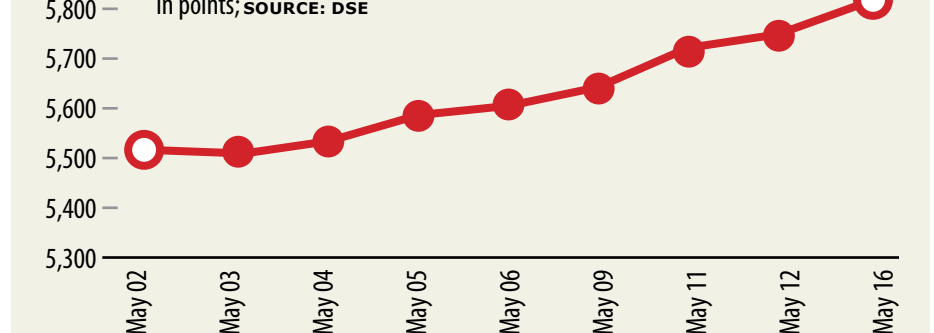
Beximco traded the most with shares worth Tk 83 crore changing hands followed by Saif Powertec, Robi Axiata, Summit Power and National Feed Mills.

At the DSE, 231 stocks rose, 88 declined and 49 remained unchanged. Malek Spinning Mills shed the most dropping 4.3 per cent followed by Emerald Oil Industries, eGeneration, Mercantile Insurance Company and Islami Insurance Bangladesh.

Chittagong Stock Exchange also rose yesterday. The Caspi, the general index of the port city bourse, surged 190 points or 1.14 per cent to stand at 16,849. Among the 292 stocks to witness trade, 192 advanced, 68 fell and 32 remained the same.

MOVEMENT OF DSEX

In points; SOURCE: DSE



Allow foreign firms to switch banks promptly

BB asks lenders

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank yesterday ordered banks to permit branches, liaison and representative offices of foreign companies promptly if they want to move their accounts to another lender.

Foreign firms operating in the country have complained to the Bangladesh Bank that their nominated banks are making undue delay in providing a no-objection certificate (NOC) when they want to switch to another bank.

Foreign firms have to secure the NOC from their existing banks to relocate their accounts as per the central bank rule.

The central bank has instructed banks to issue the NOCs immediately so that foreign companies can carry out businesses smoothly, a BB official said.

www.nccbank.com.bd

On this special occasion we express our profound gratitude and best wishes to all of our valued customers, patrons, stakeholders & well-wishers for being with us.

28 Celebrating **YEARS** of Togetherness

NCC Bank
With You. Always.



PROTTOY HOSSAIN, DIRECTOR OF DEKKO ISHO GROUP, AND TASFIA TASBIN, CEO OF MARKOPOLLO.AI, WERE PRESENT AT A RECENT DEAL SIGNING CEREMONY OVER THE GROUP INVESTING IN THE TECH STARTUP.



MD JASIM UDDIN, CHAIRMAN OF BENGAL COMMERCIAL BANK, WAS GREETED BY ITS OFFICIALS AT HEAD OFFICE IN GULSHAN, DHAKA RECENTLY ON BECOMING THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF BANGLADESH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. TARIK MORSHED, THE BANK'S MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CEO, SHAHID HOSSAIN, ADVISER, AND KM AWLAD HOSSAIN, DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR, WERE ALSO PRESENT.

Less than 3pc of US small businesses could face tax hikes under Biden plan

REUTERS

Less than 3 per cent of the roughly 30m small-business owners in the United States could face tax increases under President Joe Biden's jobs and infrastructure plan, according to a new analysis by the White House on Friday.

The White House has been seeking to leverage the support and political popularity of small-business owners in its fight to raise the corporate tax rate from 21 per cent to 28 per cent on large corporations such as Walmart Inc and Amazon.com Inc.

The move has faced stiff opposition from large national trade groups like the US Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable.

The proposed increase in the corporate tax rate to 28 per cent would not affect any small business that file taxes as a "passthrough entity" such as a limited liability corporation, said a senior administration official. Nearly all small businesses fall in that category, the official said.

The proposed increase in the top income tax bracket by 2.6 percentage points for single earners who earn over \$452,700 annually and married couples above \$509,300 per year - "would affect less than 3 percent of passthrough business owners," the official said.

Most small businesses are passthrough businesses like limited-liability organizations and S-corporations that do not pay a

corporate tax. Instead, the owners report business income and pay the tax on their personal tax returns.

"There has been a false line of attack circulating that the president's tax plan represents some kind of significant wide-ranging tax increases on small business owners and that's just simply untrue," the official said.

Biden's tax plan attempts to "level the playing field" between small businesses and large multinational corporations, by ensuring that big corporations cannot escape or eliminate the taxes they owe by offshoring jobs and profits in the United States, and pay a lower tax rate than small businesses, the White House has said.

Budgeting to make a difference

FROM PAGE B4

A health system plagued by shortages of supplies, lack of doctors and nurses, too few hospital beds, ageing facilities and underfunding is inhuman and politically suicidal.

We see little evidence of our healthcare system learning systematically from the failures in the care delivery process and health systems development.

As in India, the propagation of the second wave in Bangladesh was a result of complacency on the part of the government as well as the public. Leaders in the health care system must create a compelling vision that motivates and communicates urgency for behavioural change. They need to create an environment of psychological safety, foster open reporting and frequent sharing of insights and data, and support team learning to identify, understand, and mitigate hazards that threaten patient safety.

Social protection should rank next. The government uses an expansive definition of social protection encompassing core social assistance, social insurance, labour market interventions, livelihoods programmes, child protection, primary health services, primary and secondary stipends and credit support, pensions to retired government employees, allowances to freedom fighters, and lately interests on national savings certificates.

Excluded the non-core programmes, transfers to households and individuals aimed at addressing poverty and vulnerability in the current year budget are equivalent to 0.9 per cent of GDP across 40 programmes. This has resulted in an unenviable trade-off between coverage comprehensiveness and adequacy of benefits.

New registration undertaken by the expanded Open Market Sales, the new cash support, and the distribution of the augmented Vulnerable Group Feeding cards have been emaciated by patronage politics. The power and information asymmetry around the design and implementation of the interventions constrain opportunities for citizen engagement.

The effectiveness of quick actions at policy and operational levels was undermined by a lack of preparedness in targeting, information systems and accountability mechanisms, according to an Oxford Policy Management review.

The cottage, micro, and small

enterprises (CMSEs) are having a tough time during the pandemic. Disruptions in the supply chain, weak demand, dwindling cash flows, and depletion of working capital has stressed employment. The shedding of work in the non-agricultural part of the economy has forced many to change occupation. This cannot be good even though something is better than nothing.

Support for CMSEs offers the biggest "bang for the buck" in terms of employment and social stability. Stimulus tools that put large domestic producers at a competitive advantage over their small domestic competitors benefit the few at the cost of the many without necessarily enhancing efficiency.

Policies fell short in applying objective, transparent criteria for determining firms' eligibility and in distinguishing between liquidity problems, at which assistance has been targeted, and solvency crisis due to shifts in demand and disruption in supply chains caused by the pandemic.

The social protection interventions and support for CMSEs must have a solid financing base, an agile mechanism to identify beneficiaries, an adaptive outreach system, and a robust delivery platform. The weak institutional capacity and the lack of accountability in these processes is well-documented.

Education deserves special attention. The pandemic upended almost every aspect of school at once. About two-thirds of Bangladesh's 40 million students have remained learning disconnected for over a year. The move from classrooms to television, telephone, and computer screens for the "lucky" one-third of students tested basic ideas about instruction, attendance, testing, funding, the role of technology, and the human connections that hold it all together.

There is a need for massive public intervention to ensure an alternative mode of delivering education with universal access and safety. This is not just a question of increasing public spending on education. The quantity of spending alone will not necessarily correct the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The effectiveness of education spending is now more important than ever. Could the pandemic be the crisis that triggers serious attention to accountability in education service delivery? We certainly hope so.

Agriculture has been a saviour during the pandemic. More than 84 per cent of the 15 million farm holdings are small scale farmers owning less than 2.5 acres of land. These farm households face tough competition when selling to buyers with market power.

Good harvests often turn into growers' misery. Public procurement directly from the farmers in harvest times is one solution in theory. However, its application has not lived up to the expectation of increasing the grower share in the surplus generated in production and trading of farm output. Fiscal policy support is needed to improve the capacity to store at the local level and increase productivity, agricultural diversity, and food security.

In the current state of the economy, there is hardly any potential to increase revenue by increasing tax rates. Tax revenue mobilisation will depend on rate rationalisation and administrative improvements through digitalisation. We need to move towards simpler rate structures in customs, VAT, and corporate tax regimes. Efforts should continue to focus on limiting capital flight, tax avoidance, and tax evasion. Progress on automation to reduce the cost of tax compliance has faltered despite many donor-supported initiatives.

Reforms in tax policy and administration must be guided by efficiency and equity considerations. It is not a good idea to target sectors that contribute most for even greater revenues. Trying to squeeze out more from those who are already paying sends absolutely the wrong signals. The specific reform agenda has been debated ad infinitum. The outcomes so far have defied intentions. The reform is simple. The intentions have not been backed by actions. This must change.

The author is an economist.

A hub for small businesses

FROM PAGE B4

The availability of cheap rail transport also makes it a lucrative area for setting up factories.

Sarker praised entrepreneurs for their relentless efforts to ensure production and supply.

During a recent visit to the estate, it was found that a good number of factories are still operational.

আপনার সমস্যা - পরামর্শ
চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশনের
১৬১০৪ নম্বরে জানান।

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Chattogram City Corporation
Tiger Pass, Chittagong
www.ccc.org.bd

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.36.01.11.2021

উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র
শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র

e-Tender Notice CCC/APP/XEN-01/01/2020-21

This is a 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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to the time given below.

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Last date & time of security submission	Last date & time of submission documents
1	CCC/xen-1/D-1/w-14	Cleaning and removal of slushy earth from drain at Moljiharna Road, Chanmari Road, Highlevel Road located in 14 No. Lalkhanbazar ward.	578705	23-05-2021 14:00	23-05-2021 16:00
2	CCC/xen-1/D-1/w-15	Cleaning and removal of slushy earth from drain at Surgeon Drain to Isha Shoudagar Bari, Mehediabag I Chowdhury Bari to CDA Colony, Mahmudul Houque Faruki house back side drain, Dampara 1 No. Goli, Dhopapara located in 15 No. Bagmoniram ward.	578717	23-05-2021 14:00	23-05-2021 16:05
3	CCC/xen-1/D-1/w-20	Cleaning and removal of slushy earth from drain at Saheb Pukur Lane, Machuya Jharna, Lama School Road, Rumghata, Teri Bazar Khal, Old Ward Office drain located in 20 No. Dewanbazar ward.	578713	23-05-2021 14:00	23-05-2021 16:10
4	CCC/xen-1/D-1/w-21	Cleaning and removal of slushy earth from drain at Love Lane National Primary School to Nandan Kanan 2 No. Goli and 1 No. Goli Shafi Chairman Bari west side, Tin Pole Matha City Bank to United Hotel side to Nandan Kanan Muchipara to Ibrahim Hossain Babul Saheb Bari, Nandan Kanan Rother Pukur Par to Motin Building back side Kader Tower, Goyalpara Saif Colony to Royal Bangla Misti Bhandar back side Women College back side, Jubilee Road Tin Pole Matha to Petrol Pump Road west side big drain, Jubilee Road Tin Pole Matha to Enayet Bazar Mor big drain, Stadium North Gate to west side Love Lane big drain located in 22 No. Enayet Bazar ward.	578718	23-05-2021 14:00	23-05-2021 16:15
5	CCC/xen-1/D-1/w-22	Cleaning and removal of slushy earth from drain at Tin Pole Matha Agrani Bank side to Nandan Kanan 2 No. Goli and 1 No. Goli Shafi Chairman Bari west side, Tin Pole Matha City Bank to United Hotel side to Nandan Kanan Muchipara to Ibrahim Hossain Babul Saheb Bari, Nandan Kanan Rother Pukur Par to Motin Building back side Kader Tower, Goyalpara Saif Colony to Royal Bangla Misti Bhandar back side Women College back side, Jubilee Road Tin Pole Matha to Petrol Pump Road west side big drain, Jubilee Road Tin Pole Matha to Enayet Bazar Mor big drain, Stadium North Gate to west side Love Lane big drain located in 22 No. Enayet Bazar ward.	578719	23-05-2021 14:00	23-05-2021 16:15

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Farzana Mukta
Executive Engineer
Division-01
Chattogram City Corporation
Tiger Pass, Chattogram

CCC/PRD-206/20-21
GD-966

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স
দামপাড়া, চট্টগ্রাম
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা "The Public Procurement Act-2006" and "Regulations, 2008" (সংশোধিত-২০০৯)-এর বিধান মোতাবেক চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ সংস্থায় আগামী ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বৎসরের জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত কাজের টিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশী অধিকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নিম্ন প্রকল্পের প্যাকেজ সীলমোহরকৃত মুহূর্তকৃত খামে কোটেশন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্র. নং	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয় (বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ)
১.	এজেন্সি/সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
২.	সম্প্রদায়িক সংস্থার নাম	পুলিশ কমিশনার, সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম।
৩.	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর পদবী ও ঠিকানা	উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম। ☎- ৬৩১২৩৭, ফ্যাক্স নং-৬২১৬৫৫
৪.	দরপত্র আহ্বানের সূত্র ও তারিখ	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্মারক-বিপূহা/দরপত্র/২০২১-২২/৮০২ তারিখঃ ১১/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ।
৫.	সম্প্রদায়িক পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
৬.	অর্থের উৎস	পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা হতে অর্থ বরাদ্দ প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে।
৭.	দরপত্রের নাম	বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে প্রকাশিত ত্রুটিমুক্ত নং-০১ হইতে ০৮ পর্যন্ত বর্ণিত দরপত্রসমূহ।
৮.	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	১২/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ।
৯.	দরপত্রের তফসিল বিস্তারকারী অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	সুপারিনটেন্ডেন্ট এর কার্যালয়, বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, দামপাড়া, চট্টগ্রাম।
১০.	দরপত্র দাখিলের নিয়মাবলী সম্বলিত তফসিল (সিডিউল) বিস্তারের সময়সীমা	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি পত্রিকায় প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে ০৯/০৬/২০২১খ্রিঃ। (প্রতিটি কার্যক্রমে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ের মধ্যে)।
১১.	সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র বাস্তব দাখিলের স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম এর দামপাড়া কার্যালয়ে, ১০/০৬/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ, বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১২.	টিওসি কর্তৃক দরপত্র বাস্তব দাখিলের স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম এর দামপাড়া কার্যালয়ে, ১০/০৬/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ, বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১৩.	টিকাদারের প্রাক যোগ্যতা	"The Public Procurement Act-2006" and "Regulations, 2008" (সংশোধিত-২০০৯) এর বিধান মোতাবেক নিম্নে বর্ণিত কাগজপত্রাদি (১ম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত) দাখিল করতে হবে। (ক) নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র, (খ) ব্যবসায়িক ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, (গ) দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি পত্রিকায় প্রকাশের তারিখ পর্যন্ত পূর্বের ০৩ (তিন) মাসের তফসিলভুক্ত যে কোন বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংকের সাথে লেনদেন এর হিসাব বিবরণীসহ ব্যাংক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত আর্থিক স্বচ্ছতার সনদপত্র, (ঘ) প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকানা সনদপত্র এফিডেভিট, (ঙ) টিআইএন নম্বর উল্লেখসহ হালসনের আয়কর পরিশোধ সনদপত্র, (চ) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র, (ছ) সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতার সনদ, (জ) দরপত্র দাখিলকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে কোন সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠান কর্তৃক কোনো তালিকাভুক্ত করা হয় নাই মর্মে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক প্যাকেজ অধীকারনামা (খ) বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল চট্টগ্রাম উষধপত্র ও শৈল চিকিৎসার উষধ সামগ্রী সরবরাহের ক্ষেত্রে নিজ প্রতিষ্ঠানের নামে ড্রাগ লাইসেন্সসহ চট্টগ্রাম শহরে ফার্মেসী আছে মর্মে ফার্মেসীর প্যাকেজ সনদ থাকতে হবে। কোন ব্যক্তি কর্তৃক অন্য ফার্মেসীর নামে চুক্তিনামা গ্রহণযোগ্য নহে। যেকোন সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের চিকিৎসা ও শৈল চিকিৎসায় উষধ সামগ্রী সরবরাহের সনদপত্র থাকতে হবে।

আইটেম নং	দরপত্রের বিষয়	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্রের সাদে আর্নেস্টম্যানি (ফেরতযোগ্য)	কাজের সময়সীমা
১.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ রোগীদের পথ্য সরবরাহ।	৫০০/-	৫০,০০০/-	৩০শে জুন ২০২২খ্রিঃ পর্যন্ত
২.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ চিকিৎসা ও শৈল্য চিকিৎসা সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহ (কোম্পানী)	৩,০০০/-	৪০,০০০/-	
৩.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ চিকিৎসা ও শৈল্য চিকিৎসা সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহ (ফার্মেসী)।	২,০০০/-	৭৫,০০০/-	
৪.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ রোগীদের বিছানাপত্র ধোলাই।	৫০০/-	৫,০০০/-	
৫.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ রোগীদের বিছানাপত্র সরবরাহ।	৫০০/-	১০,০০০/-	
৬.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ রোগীদের ব্যবহার্য দ্রব্যাদি সরবরাহ।	৫০০/-	৭,০০০/-	
৭.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ অন্যান্য মনিহারি সরবরাহ।	৫০০/-	৭,০০০/-	
৮.	বিভাগীয় পুলিশ হাসপাতাল, চট্টগ্রাম এ স্বাস্থ্য বিধান সামগ্রী সরবরাহ।	৫০০/-	৭,০০০/-	

বিঃ দ্রঃ- কর্তৃপক্ষ সর্বনিম্ন দরপত্র গ্রহণে বাধ্য নহেন, কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিক্রমে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মোঃ আমির জাফর
বিপি নং-৭১০১০২০৯৬২
উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সদর)
চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ
চট্টগ্রাম
ফোনঃ ০৩১-৬৩১২৩৭
E-mail: dchgmp@police.gov.bd

জিডি-৯৬৮

Flared natural gas latest prize in bitcoin miners' energy quest

AFP, Washington

As the value of bitcoin soars and concerns rise about the energy-intensive process needed to obtain it, cryptocurrency entrepreneurs in the United States believe they have found a solution in flared natural gas.

Profitably creating, or mining, bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies requires masses of computers dedicated to solving deliberately complicated equations -- an endeavor that globally consumes more electricity than entire nations, but for which these start-ups say the jets of flaming gas placed next to oil wells are perfect power sources.

"I think the market is enormous," said Sergii Gerasymovych, CEO of EZ Blockchain, which has six different data centers powered off natural gas in the US states of Utah and New Mexico, as well as in Canada.

Across the country, companies like EZ Blockchain are setting up shipping containers where racks containing hundreds of computers mine cryptocurrency, fueled by natural gas from oil wells that otherwise would be burned in the open. Interest in their work has grown over the past year.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies



A handout photo from Giga Energy Solutions shows a natural gas generator powering a bitcoin mining centre in north Texas in May.

like ethereum and dogecoin have seen meteoric price spikes since the Covid-19 pandemic turned the global economy on its head and mainstream companies began to embrace the technology.

But a backlash has formed against the digital assets' energy usage, fueled by concerns it relies on carbon-emitting power sources that contribute to climate change.

This week, Tesla boss Elon

Musk criticized bitcoin's power consumption, particularly of energy produced from coal, and said he would no longer accept the cryptocurrency as payment for his electric cars.

While entrepreneurs in the fledgling industry say using natural gas that is otherwise wasted represents a solution to these concerns, its ability to actually cut emissions remains to be seen, said

Tony Scott, managing director of analysis at oil and gas research firm BTU Analytics.

"In the grand scheme of things and relative to other load, yes, it's small," Scott said. "They are creating economic value (but) they're not necessarily significantly changing the emissions profiles.

Huge numbers of processors worldwide are dedicated to the task of mining bitcoin. The activity uses 149.6 terawatt-hours per year, according to the Cambridge Bitcoin Energy Consumption Index (CBECI). That is slightly less than all the electricity consumed by Egypt.

As the most popular cryptocurrency, bitcoin is undoubtedly valuable, trading at around \$50,000 in mid-May from less than \$10,000 a year ago, giving miners incentive to find the cheapest source of power to increase their margins. Enter flared natural gas. Oil producers flare natural gas if they can't find a way to process it, which, with prices low and pipelines complicated to build, can be the case worldwide.

"Miners tend to be based around areas where there tends to be surplus power. What is new... is this whole concept of taking gas flaring," said Jason Deane, bitcoin analyst at Quantum Economics.

Banking stocks suffer despite higher dividends

FROM PAGE B1

A moratorium on bank loan payments was offered in March last year after the economy started suffering from the effects of the pandemic.

The support was initially expected to last until the end of June. But, later, it was extended up to December as the crisis showed no signs of abating.

In 2020, banks were able to provide much higher dividends. But many banks retained some of their profits as safekeeping for the coming years, Chowdhury said, adding that the banks were apprehensive of what was to come in the coming months.

According to the banker, it was not normal for banking stocks to trade at lower prices because the central bank strictly monitored banks. As a result, they fared comparatively better than many other companies.

The price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio of the banking sector is the lowest among all the sectors, giving some explanation as to why the prices of the stocks in the sector were the lowest despite the generation of higher profits.

The P/E ratio of the banking sector is 6.9, whereas, for fuel and power, it is 11.8, pharmaceuticals 18 and textile 18.8, according to data of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Apart from this, the stock price of 21 banks was less than Tk 20, and for some, it is hovering around the face value of Tk 10.

"Stock prices are not reliant on dividends; rather, future profitability is the main influencer," said Arif Khan, vice-chairman of Shanta Asset Management.

Investors have a common perception that most banks failed to get back what they had loaned out in the past year, so there would be an impact on the balance sheet in the coming years.

"Investors fear that the bad loan portfolio of banks will be larger in the coming years, thus their provisioning requirements will increase," said Khan, also a former commissioner of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission.

The second wave of infections might also have an impact on the banking sector in the coming months, he added.

Non-performing loans stood at Tk 88,734 crore last year, which was 7.66 per cent of the outstanding loans of Tk 11,58,775 crore as of December, showed data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The higher profits of banks were not expected due to the lower interest rate regime and the pandemic plaguing the economy, said stock investor Abdur Rahim.

From April 1 of last year, the lending rate was capped at 9 per cent, for which the interest income of banks dropped.

The stocks of banks are not preferable for investment because the asset quality is not good, while they also have a huge amount of non-performing loans, the investor added.

Boro output to decline

FROM PAGE B1

The output is also expected to go up by 3.5 per cent to 3.58 crore tonnes, it said, on the assumption of favourable weather conditions, sufficient supply of seed and fertilizers, proper irrigation, and continued support from the agriculture ministry and the DAE.

The USDA raised its projection on the production of pre-monsoon crop Aus, and rain-fed Aman rice.

The government continued to encourage farmers to produce hybrid and some high-yield rice varieties such as BRRI Dhan-50, BRRI Dhan-54, and BRRI Dhan-84 and distributed hybrid seeds and fertilizers to boost domestic production of the grain to contain prices.

"The Covid-19 pandemic and its associated lockdown measures have led to consumers stocking personal allocations

of rice, thereby driving up domestic prices. Speculation in the market is also driving up prices," said the USDA.

High prices have led to greater returns for farmers, but the farmers are faced with rising labour costs, so the profit increases are minimal this year, it said.

"Weather conditions over the next month will be important to monitor. Farmers were late to plant this year's Boro rice crop, so the upcoming monsoon season could dramatically impact this year's harvest."

The USDA said approximately 50 per cent of Boro rice would be harvested by the second week of May when the monsoon season was expected to start.

It forecast a decline in rice import to 500,000 tonnes in anticipation of a strong harvest and increased rice production in the upcoming Aus and Aman seasons.

US retail sales flat, inflation fears on the rise

AFP, Washington

The US economic recovery showed signs of hitting some turbulence as shoppers curbed their spending last month and manufacturing slowed due to supply bottlenecks.

After a rush of shopping in March, US retail sales were flat in April, and while auto sales rose, vehicle production fell amid a global semiconductor supply crunch, according to government data released Friday.

Meanwhile, a private survey showed consumer confidence fell due to concerns about rising prices as the reopening of the world's largest economy drives speculation of a sustained rise in inflation.

Officials in President Joe Biden's administration have tried to downplay the fears of a slowing recovery, but acknowledged there could be some bumpy months ahead.

"This was an unprecedented economic downturn... where we completely powered down the economy," said Cecilia Rouse, chair of Biden's Council of Economic Advisers.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ. ট্যুরিস্ট পুলিশ (হেডকোয়ার্টার্স). বাড়ি নং-৩২, রোড নং-১, ব্লক-এ. বনশী, রামপুরা, ঢাকা. তারিখ: ১৬/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ. স্মারক নং-৪৪.০১.২৬৬৭.৯৭৬.০২.০৫০.২১-২৫২৫. উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি. নিম্নলিখিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরে ট্যুরিস্ট পুলিশ, ঢাকায় নিম্নোক্ত মালামাল/সেবা সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন দরদাতাদের নিকট হতে পাবলিক প্রিকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রিকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা/২০০৮ ও তৎসহ সংশোধনী মোতাবেক দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

Merkel rejects bringing forward Germany's exit from coal

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday rejected demands to bring forward an exit date for ending coal generation in Germany, currently set at 2038. "Those affected need some reliability on the path to climate neutrality," Merkel said. "I don't want to unravel this again after one year."

Banks can't appoint former MDs

Against the backdrop, the BB asked three banks in January to remove independent directors from their boards. In its circular, the central bank also instructed banks not to appoint their MDs, deputy and additional managing directors as advisers and consultants within five years since their retirement.

Before the issuance of the circular, banks were permitted to appoint former MDs and top executives as consultants or advisers one year after the retirement of the officials.

A number of banks earlier suffered from a conflict of interests while taking important decisions due to such appointments, a BB official said.

"We have given an explanation of the law so that banks comply properly and avoid violation of the rules," he said.

Banking hour 10am to 2pm until May 23

The government has enforced lockdown-like restrictions since April 5 after the Covid-19 infections rate and death tolls began rising alarmingly. As the situation worsened, it went for a strict countrywide lockdown from April 14.

The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd. Gazipur-1700. Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Appointment of Consulting Firm. Tender No. 75/2021. Date: 17/05/2021. 01. Name of procuring entity: The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd. 02. Procuring entity district: Gazipur. 03. Expression of Interest (EOI): Selection of Consulting Firm (National). 04. EOI Ref. No.: 53.18.3300.019.07.02.2021-196, Date: 17/05/2021. 05. Date: 17/05/2021. 06. Procurement sub-method: Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS). 07. Budget and source of funds: SPCBL's own fund. 08. Project/program name: Extension of Bank Note and others Security Production Area. 09. EOI publication date: 17/05/2021. 10. Tender closing date and time: 14/06/2021 (11:00am). 11. Tender opening date and time: 14/06/2021 (11:05am). 12. Brief description of the assignment: Planning, design, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of the construction of the infrastructures to be implemented in the project "Extension of Bank Note and others Security Production Area". The consultancy services include the following tasks: i) Preparation of GIS and digital survey map of full corporation (66 acre) area. Layout plan, Architectural, 3D perspective views for the project including plans, 3D perspective views, elevation, sections and architectural details as per design criterion outlined, Sub-soil investigation at proposed construction area. Structural, Electrical, Sanitary & Plumbing design drawing of proposal approx. 30,000sqft plinth area of Bank Note production area. 5-storied 30,000sqft plinth area of others Security Production area and Extension of existing EME building. Replacement of HT cable, road, security fence, drain and other utility services discussion with SPCLB authority, ii) Assessment and modification plan of existing HVAC system and preparation of design drawing with detailed calculation of new HVAC system at proposed area from existing plant, iii) Assessment and modification plan of existing systems and preparation of design drawing of compressed air system, security control system, fire alarm detection system, firefighting system and power generation & distribution system of the factory establishment, iv) Assessment and modification plan of existing chemical doses plant and preparation of design drawing of new water treatment and chemical doses plan for proposed extension area, v) All engineering design & Drawings & Estimated cost must be vetted by BRTC (Bureau of Research, Testing & Consultation), BUET in consultation with SPCLB authority, vi) Preparation of detail BoQ, Technical specification, Tender schedule and floating e-Tender at SPCBL/BB website, vii) Project Management Consultancy during the design and Construction phase including supervision. 13. Expected qualification of consulting firm: i) The Consulting firm must have a minimum of 5 (five) years' experience in building design and supervision; ii) The firm should have experience in designing similar nature (manufacturing industry building) of projects. 14. Experience, resource and delivery capacity required for responsiveness: Interested Consulting firms must provide information in details that they are qualified to perform the same. Brochures, description of similar assignment & experience certificate(s) have to be submitted. The documents will also include: i) valid trade licence (up-to-date), TIN and BIN certificate, up-to-date income tax clearance certificate, bank solvency certificate etc. to be submitted by the consulting firm. The EOI will be reviewed on the basis of the following: i) Registration of firm, ii) Availability of key professionals, iii) Qualifications and experience of the team leader and leader of individual discipline; iv) Availability of resources, v) Average annual turnover of the consulting firm for the last 03 (three) years, vi) Experience of the firm in similar consulting services for the last 05 (five) years with respective certificate from employer, vii) Experience of the firm(s) in other works, viii) If the applicant is a JV national/international partner(s) then please indicate the responsibilities of each Party and an MOU between/among the parties should be submitted. Members of a JV/Consortium shall be jointly & severally liable for the entire performance of the assignment. ix) History of litigation in courts or any arbitration proceedings (if any). 15. Special instructions: i) Consultant will be selected in accordance with the SPCBL own procurement policy, ii) Interested Consultancy may obtain as for further information at the address below during the office period, iii) The prospective Consultant shall submit all supporting documents as "ORIGINAL" and "COPY" in separate sealed envelopes marked with the "Extension of Bank Note and Others Security Production Area" to the signatory addressed, iv) Due to any unavoidable reasons, if the tender cannot be opened in due time, then it will be opened in the next office day at the same time, v) The Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued to the short listed firms only. The client will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firm(s) in connection with the preparation or submission of the EOI. 16. Name of official inviting EOI: Maruf Ahamed. 17. Designation of official inviting: Executive Engineer (Civil). 18. Address of official inviting EOI: The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur. 19. Contact details of official inviting EOI: Ph: 88-02-9205110-15, Ext.-266. 20. The procuring entity reserves all right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever. No claim will be entertained in this regard. Maruf Ahamed, Executive Engineer (Civil), The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur-1703.

BSCIC INDUSTRIAL ESTATE IN NILPHAMARI

A hub for small businesses

But they are fighting for survival due to Covid-19

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

EAM ASADUZZAMAN

The industrial estate of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in Nilphamari has become a hub for small businesses as it gives them easy access to key markets in the northern part of the country.

However, the estate has experienced its fair share of adversities amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

"Although foreign buyers are not placing orders because of the pandemic, we have continued our production in the hope that things will be better soon," said Nur Islam, a director of Selim Agro.

Selim Agro, the largest factory in the BSCIC industrial estate, employed about 450 people to produce various jute goods for export to India and Nepal during the pre-pandemic era. Now, the number of workers has fallen to 300.

Arman Hossain, the labour supervisor of the factory, said that unlike many mills outside the estate, their workers were paid in a timely manner despite the current situation.

Abul Kashem, president of the BSCIC Factory Owners Association, said the Department of Environment should arrange awareness programmes on safe

factory operations to help tackle the Covid-19 situation.

Established on 11 acres of land in Saidpur municipality's Neyamatpur area in 1986, all 92 plots in the estate were allocated to 49 industries within a few years.

Today, the estate is home to many small enterprises, particularly from the consumer goods, light engineering, chemical, and agro-based product sectors.

"And in the face of increasing demand from young entrepreneurs, the authorities are actively considering a proposal to expand the industrial estate by another 40 acres," said Jewel Chandra Sen, deputy director of the BSCIC district office in Nilphamari.

This sets the Nilphamari estate apart from other BSCIC industrial parks in adjoining districts, where plots either lie useless or are completely monopolised by large enterprises.

"This estate may be considered a breeding ground for small entrepreneurs as one to three plots can be allocated to a single party. Larger units are not preferred since they take up most of the area," said Partha Sarathi Sarker, acting chief of the industrial park.

"Our success lies in the good communication network as the estate is situated beside the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway, which provides access to big markets in Rangpur and Dinajpur," he added.

READ MORE ON B2



EAM ASADUZZAMAN

The industrial estate of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation in Nilphamari is home to many small enterprises thanks to the good communication network.

Budgeting to make a difference



ZAHID HUSSAIN

While the pandemic waves on, the budget should focus on crisis management, prioritising spending on health, targeting fiscal support to distressed families and enterprises, restoring the functionality of education, and building on the resilience demonstrated by agriculture while keeping an eye on revenues. A business-as-usual budget like last year will miss the boat again.

There is a lot to learn from the implementation experience in health and social protection. We did not have the benefit last year of knowing what we know now about how the policy response to the pandemic works and where the fault lines are.



Hospitals have struggled with the number of patients and are burdened with shortages of ventilators, ICUs and rooms. These need emergency attention.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAT



OPINION

Overambitious targets every year have only produced recycled budget conversations. It is about time we recognise the futility of such targets. Subsidies for financial stimulus packages have worked better for the formal sector large enterprises than the informal and even formal sector cottage, micro, and small enterprises.

Cash and food-based social protection programmes have suffered from the usual red tape and corruption. Implementation of the emergency health project with provisions to expand vitally needed health infrastructure has been dismal. Consequently, the new variant caught our health system unprepared once again!

The pandemic has taught us no uncertain terms that there is no shortcut to public health. A

state of moral decay is glaringly evident in healthcare. The private healthcare industry caters mostly to the wealthy who can purchase the best available care locally or flee to safety in rented jets.

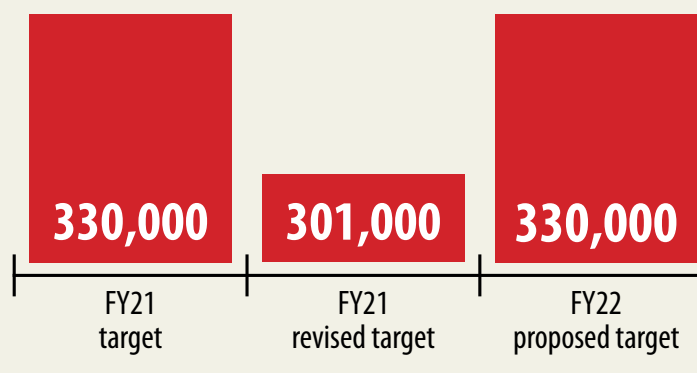
Responding to public health emergencies is resource-intensive and not commercially attractive. It, therefore, does not resonate well with the private sector. Deterred by the expensive healthcare system and no insurance cover, many people choose not to go to the hospitals. Government hospitals have struggled with the number of patients and are burdened with shortages of ventilators, ICUs, and rooms. These need emergency attention.

Vaccination should be priority number one. The management of vaccination centres has been

REVENUE COLLECTION TARGET

In crore taka

SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY



excellent thus far. The government has also done a good job in lining up funds for vaccines. The billion-dollar question is when we will be able to use the money to procure vaccines. The strategy to rely solely on one country and one domestic distributor has brought upon us many regrets, including a weaker bargaining power in negotiating vaccine import and production

deals. Beyond vaccination, testing, diagnosing what behaviour is causing the spread, treating the infected, and non-Covid care deserve a lot of policy and budgetary care. The health ministry and medical service providers should learn from their failures and that of India.

READ MORE ON B2

GLOBAL BUSINESS

Job fears, price spikes mean heartburn for Biden

REUTERS, Washington

High unemployment. Rising prices. Gas lines.

They're a bad memory for Americans old enough to remember the 1970s - but they're also likely causing a few sleepless nights in the White House, as the United States' economic recovery from the unprecedented coronavirus recession hits some bumps.

The jolts are dampening consumer confidence, ramping up inflation fears, and helping Republicans build their case against President Joe Biden and his ambitious plans to revamp the US economy with trillions in new spending.

As the 1970s show, high joblessness and rising prices the United States saw in April can be a potent political force.

Republicans crafted a "misery index" out of the two factors to attack then-president Jimmy Carter. After hitting 75 per cent approval ratings early in his presidency, the Democrat was trounced in a 1980 landslide.

Support for Biden remains strong and US equity markets remain near record highs.

The White House says there's bound to be surprises as the United States emerges from an unprecedented pandemic.

"We must keep in mind

that an economy will not heal instantaneously," Cecilia Rouse, the chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers told reporters Friday. "It takes several weeks for people to get full immunity from vaccinations, and even more time for those left jobless from

the pandemic to find and start a suitable job."

Rouse, speaking to reporters at the White House, said a mismatch between supply and demand due to the pandemic and the economic snap-back had pushed inflation higher but that the mismatch should prove temporary.

"I fully expect that will work itself out in the coming months," she said.

The Federal Reserve also is betting heavily inflation will cool on its own, even as hiring picks up steam over the summer, Americans start to travel again, and the Fed keeps its massive crisis levels of support intact.

The White House wouldn't offer a timeline for when the economy will smooth out. But it doesn't expect a repeat of April's weak jobs report, and recent data show applicants for unemployment benefits fell to a 14-month low.

"The trend lines continue to be positive," a senior White House official told Reuters on Wednesday. The White House also believes the Fed can handle what comes up, he said.



US President Joe Biden leaves after speaking about the coronavirus disease response and the vaccination programme from the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, US.

REUTERS

US fuel crisis eases as pipeline returns to normal after hack



Motorists fill their cars at one of the few remaining gas stations that still has fuel in Arlington, Virginia on May 13, 2021.

REUTERS

Widespread gasoline shortages along the US East Coast began to ease slightly on Saturday as the operator of the nation's biggest fuel pipeline said it was back to delivering "millions of gallons per hour" following last week's cyberattack.

Ships and trucks were deployed to fill up storage tanks after the six-day Colonial Pipeline shutdown, the most disruptive cyberattack on record, triggered widespread panic buying that left filling stations across the US Southeast dry.

"We have returned the system to normal operations, delivering millions of gallons per hour to the markets we serve," said the company, which had begun gradual restart of the pipeline on Wednesday.

More than 13,400 gas stations surveyed in the east and south by fuel tracking app GasBuddy were experiencing outages on Saturday, down from 16,200 early the previous day.

On Saturday evening, about 75 per cent of gas stations in Washington, DC were still without fuel, an improvement from Friday's figure of 88 per cent, the app showed. Shortages also eased in North Carolina and Virginia, but were about the same in Georgia.

US gasoline demand dropped 12.6 per cent from the previous week, probably due to an easing of "crazed" panic buying just after the pipeline shut, said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

The nationwide average for a gallon of regular unleaded was \$3.04 on Saturday, from \$2.96 a week ago, according to AAA.

The pipeline outage accelerated increases in gasoline prices that were "already rising due to higher crude prices and demand ahead of Memorial Day," said AAA spokeswoman Ellen Edmonds.

She was referring to the May 31 holiday that traditionally kicks off the US summer driving season. Places served by the pipeline saw the biggest price jumps this week - with Georgia and the Carolinas up 20 cents per gallon or more - but they should also see prices decline again as supplies improve, Edmonds said.

Florence, South Carolina had the nation's biggest price increase at 30 cents, while prices rose 9 cents in DC.

Ships deployed under emergency waivers were also moving fuel from US Gulf Coast refineries to the northeast, while 18-wheel tanker trucks were ferrying gasoline from Alabama to Virginia, helping to stem the shortages.

Taiwan urges no panic buying amid new Covid rules

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan appealed to people to avoid panic buying of items such as instant noodles and toilet paper as new curbs on gatherings and movement took effect to rein in the spread of Covid-19 during a spike in domestic infections.

Taiwan raised its coronavirus alert level in the capital, Taipei, and the surrounding city, on Saturday, imposing two weeks of restrictions that will shut many venues and limit gatherings.

While total infections since the pandemic began remain low at 1,475, the recent community transmissions have alarmed a population that had become accustomed to life staying close to normal, with no full lockdowns of the kind seen elsewhere.

In messages late on Saturday, the president, premier and economy ministry took to Facebook to say there was no need to hoard or rush to the shops, after people scrambled to stock up on basic goods, mainly instant noodles and toilet paper.

"After more than a year of preparation, the country's anti-pandemic materials, civilian goods and raw materials are sufficient, and the stores are also operating as usual to replenish goods," President Tsai Ing-wen said.

French supermarket chain Carrefour said it was limiting purchases of items such as masks and instant noodles in its Taiwan stores, asking people to buy only what they need.

The economy ministry showed pictures of warehouses piled to the ceiling with boxes of

instant noodles, saying supplies were "like a mountain" with plenty of toilet paper and canned food to go round as well.

Premier Su Tseng-chang made a similar appeal on his Facebook page. He triggered amusement early last year, during a previous rush for toilet paper, by saying people "only have one butthole" and should calm down.

While not ordering a total lockdown, the government is urging people to stay at home as much as possible.

The health ministry brought out its dog mascot, a shiba inu called Zongchai, to reinforce the message on social media.

"Study Zongchai and stay at home," it said, showing pictures of the canine lying on the floor resting.