

# Subsidised TCB sales benefitted 3.34cr families

Commerce ministry says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Some 3.34 crore families across the country benefitted from the sale of basic commodities at subsidised rates by the state-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) between March last year and May this year, claimed a commerce ministry statement yesterday.

The TCB, a body under the commerce ministry, sold 2.34 tonnes of basic commodities including edible oil, sugar, red lentil, onion, gram, potato and dates to 13.33 crore people, it read.

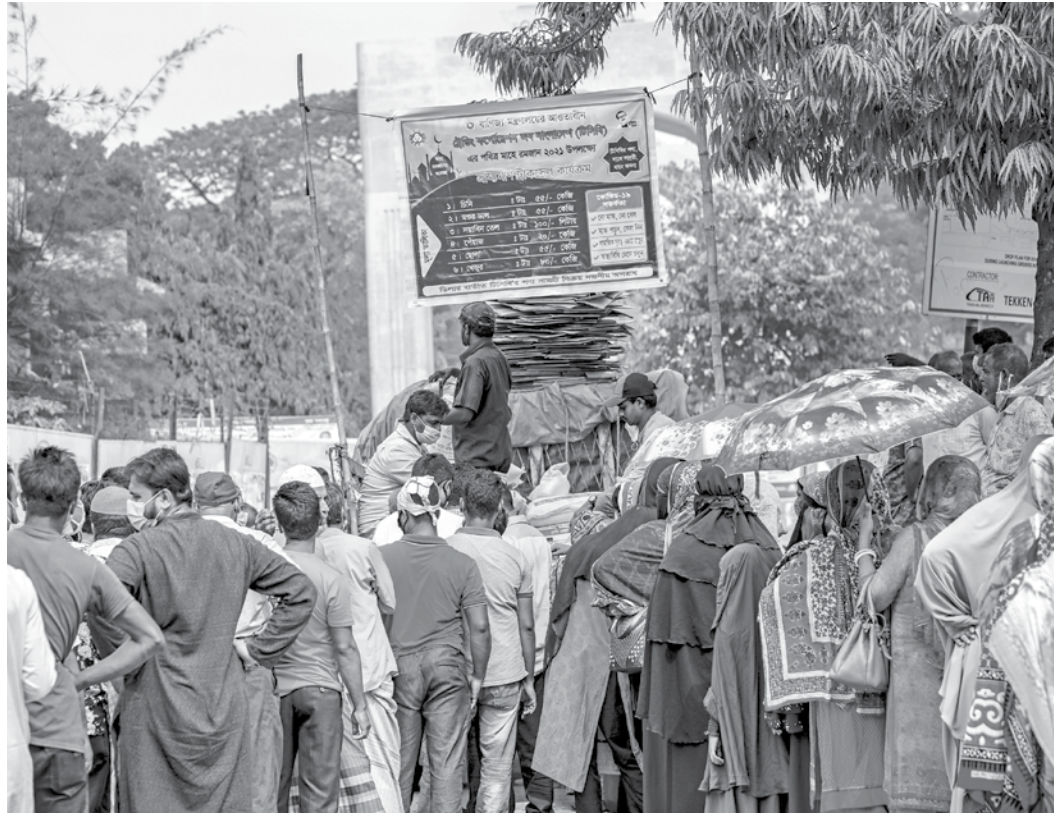
In the statement, both Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and Senior Secretary to the Ministry Md Jafar Uddin claimed that prices of basic commodities had remained stable last year except for that of edible oil.

The prices were more or less stable between 2014 and May 2020, it read.

However, the prices started climbing in international markets since June last year and it impacts fell on the local markets as some 95 per cent of the demand is met through imports, said the statement.

Over a year ago, the international market price was Tk 52.11 per kilogramme (kg). However, it has now come to reach Tk 135.84, registering a 160 per cent year-on-year hike.

The price in the domestic markets had varied between Tk 88 and Tk 93 per kg. However, currently it is between Tk 120 and Tk 125, registering a 35 per cent rise, it said.



Such open market sale of daily essentials at subsidised rates by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh helps low-income people cope with market price fluctuations.

# Biden looks abroad for electric vehicle metals, in blow to US miners

REUTERS

US President Joe Biden will rely on ally countries to supply the bulk of the metals needed to build electric vehicles and focus on processing them domestically into battery parts, part of a strategy designed to placate environmentalists, two administration officials with direct knowledge told Reuters.

US President Joe Biden will rely on ally countries to supply the bulk of the metals needed to build electric vehicles and focus on processing them domestically into battery parts, part of a strategy designed to placate environmentalists, two administration officials with direct knowledge told Reuters.

The plans will be a blow to US miners who had hoped Biden would rely primarily on domestically sourced metals, as his campaign had signaled last autumn, to help fulfill his ambitions for a less carbon-intensive economy.

Rather than focus on permitting more US mines, Biden's team is more focused on creating jobs that process minerals domestically into electric vehicle (EV) battery parts, according to the people.

Such a plan would help cut US reliance on industry leader China for EV materials while also enticing unions with manufacturing work and, in theory, reduce pandemic-fueled unemployment.

The US Commerce Department is organizing a June conference to attract more EV manufacturing to the country. Biden's proposed \$1.7 trillion

infrastructure plan earmarks \$174 billion to boost the domestic EV market with tax credits and grants for battery manufacturers, among other incentives. The department declined to comment. "It's not that hard to dig a hole. What's hard is getting that stuff out and getting it to processing facilities. That's what the US government is focused on," said one of the sources.

The approach would see the United States rely on Canada, Australia, and Brazil - among others - to produce most of the critical raw materials needed, while it competes for higher-value jobs turning those minerals into computer chips and batteries, according to the two sources. Securing the full supply chain from metals to batteries does not require the United States to be the primary producer of the raw materials, said one of the sources.

A full strategy will be finalized after a year-long supply chain review involving national security and economic development officials.

Biden officials want to ensure the administration's EV aspirations are not imperiled as domestic mines face roadblocks, the sources said, both from environmentalists and even some Democrats.

"It rings hollow when I hear everyone use this as a national defense argument, that we have to build new mines to have a greener economy," said US Representative Betty McCollum, a Democrat who has introduced legislation that would permanently block Antofagasta Plc's proposed Twin Metals copper mine in Minnesota.

# Govt mulls higher tax to curb fake fish farming claims

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Up until now, incomes of up to Tk 10 lakh from fishery, shrimp and poultry hatchery and fish farming had been tax-free.

Only 5 per cent tax is payable on the next Tk 10 lakh in income. On annual incomes of over Tk 20 lakh, only 10 per cent is payable as tax, whereas the highest rate of tax for an individual is 25 per cent.

The tax authority introduced the concessional tax rate first in July 2013 for two years to encourage diversification and increase production of fish to address nutrition deficiency in the country.

The original concession was 3 per cent tax on any amount of income from fish farming. But some businesspeople, politicians and even government officials abused the privilege, said taxmen earlier.

The abuse was tricky to catch as it is difficult to assess fish stocks in ponds, which made it easy for corrupt people

to claim any amount of income from fish farming. And the abuse went as far as people who did not even own fish farms were claiming income from the business to evade taxes, said taxmen.

To curb the malpractice, the NBR scrapped the reduced tax rate for the sectors by the end of 2014 but it had to reinstate the privilege from July 1, 2015 in the face of pressure from various interest groups.

Now, the finance ministry officials said they want to collect tax from high income earners of these sectors.

"We are not planning to impose any new tax burden on small and medium fish farmers," he said.

However, Md Tariqul Islam Zaheer, managing director of Shundarban Shrimps, a semi-intensive shrimp farm at Dakop, Khulna, said fish farmers suffer from losses for factors, including natural calamities.

"However we cannot realise our investment as we do not get any insurance coverage," he said.

"It will be frustrating for genuine fisheries entrepreneurs like us. Many of us are highly indebted for losses for natural calamities and low revenue. At this moment, a hike in the tax rate will affect us."

He suggested the tax authority increase supervision to curb fraudulence attempts at evading tax.

Over the past two decades, Bangladesh saw a massive expansion of aquaculture to meet increasing demand for fish for population growth and rising incomes.

Aquaculture area doubled to 8.21 lakh hectares in fiscal 2018-19 from 4.12 lakh hectares in fiscal 2001-02.

Production grew threefold to 24.88 lakh tonnes the fiscal 2018-19 from 7.86 lakh tonnes in fiscal 2001-02, showed data from the Department of Fisheries.

Cultured fish accounted for 57 per cent of the 43.88 lakh tonnes of fish produced in fiscal 2018-19. The ratio was 42 per cent in fiscal 2001-02.

# Huge losses eclipse state banks' progress in trimming bad loans

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A provision shortfall is an amount by which a financial obligation or liability exceeds the amount of cash available.

Banks have to keep 0.50 per cent to 5 per cent in provisioning against general category loans, 20 per cent against classified loans of substandard category, and 50 per cent against classified loans of doubtful category.

They have to set aside 100 per cent against the classified loans of bad or loss category.

Sonali, Janata and BDBL did not face any provision deficit last year.

The central bank held a meeting with the government-owned banks in March as part of a memorandum of understanding between the regulator and the lenders to improve their financial health.

At the time, the BB had asked the banks to recoup the defaulted loans, which have piled up because of the siphoning of funds through financial felonies, and monitor the

top defaulters to recover classified loans speedily.

The central bank holds the meeting every three months.

Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of the BB, said that the central bank had been giving regulatory forbearance for long to help them keep running operation.

The government injected a huge amount of capital into the banks, but this failed to improve the situation because of a lack of corporate governance, he said.

"The banks are controlled by the finance ministry. This is a major problem. The ministry should relinquish its control over them in the interest of the entire financial sector," Ahmed said.

"If the central bank does not control the banks strictly, the financial health of the banks will not improve."

There is a lack of professionalism among bankers, and this is another major trouble facing the lenders, he said.

# Submarine Cable Company's profits double in Jul-Mar

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"During this period, BSCCL management has decided to release a sum of provision for bad and doubtful debts made on earlier period or years due to realisation of long-pending outstanding Tk 36.89 crore from BTCL and Tk 7.09 from BSNL, India. As such there is a positive impact of EPS enhancement," the company said.

Internet use increased significantly during the pandemic. Bandwidth usage increased about 20-25 per cent because people are using the internet for 6-8 hours a day amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the average of which was about 2 hours before the outbreak. According to BSCCL, about 2,600-2,700 Gbps of bandwidth is currently being used in the country. The state-run entity has 2,800 Gbps of capacity from its two submarine cables. Currently, it provides 1,600Gbps. The third undersea cable will add another 7,200 Gbps, said BSCCL insiders.

BB allows banking in areas under lockdown

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The central bank extended banking hours by half an hour on May 24 and decided to keep banks open from 10:00am to 2:30pm until May 30.

The banking watchdog took the decision after the government extended the nationwide restrictions on public movement until May 30 to curb the second wave of the Covid-19 infections.

# Local IT firms offering blockchain solutions abroad, Palak says

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under the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunication and Information Technology.

He said IBM was the first partner of the centre while the BCC was working with Bangladesh Blockchain Olympiad as the host country of International Blockchain Olympiad in 2021.

He said the government's main target was to provide citizen e-services.

The lack of data, information theft and increasing cyberattacks on government services have become a common phenomenon and any manipulation of critical information or data could affect the credibility of the system, he said.

"So, we need to utilise blockchain technology in providing citizen services and ensure the security of data," he added.

Salman F Rahman, the prime minister's private industry and investment adviser, said blockchain had emerged as a potent idea and response to bureaucratic

incapability around the world to keep up with the rapid technological changes and transformations.

The technology is central to cryptocurrency, which has swept many developed countries and unnerved the financial system, he said.

"The blockchain has been gaining traction around the world for good and bad reasons. On the one hand, it's a consequential concept of technology. One may seek to reduce the control of the authority on transaction and financial activities," said Rahman.

"It seeks to completely overhaul the way we learn to manage assets, and organisational and government boundaries around them," he added.

Prof Shibli Rubayat-Ul-Islam, chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, and Md Sirazul Islam, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, also spoke.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
National Board of Revenue (NBR)  
Internal Resources Division (IRD)  
Ministry of Finance

**Corrigendum-2**

**Tender Name:** Procurement of Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Testing of 6 units fixed X-ray Container Scanners, 12 Units of Radioactive Portal Monitors, 6 Units Weighbridge and Central Image Monitoring System and Regional Image Monitoring System and interfacing between Central and Local Image Monitoring System to the X-ray Container Scanner along with the weigh bridge and ASYCUDA World system and 5 years Operation, Maintenance and Service.

**Tender Number:** File-08.01.0000.067.82.001.20

**Corrigendum No:** File-08.01.0000.067.82.001.20

Date: 25/05/2021

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the Tender Invitation Notice published for "Procurement of Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Testing of 6 units fixed X-ray Container Scanners, 12 Units of Radioactive Portal Monitors, 6 Units Weighbridge and Central Image Monitoring System and Regional Image Monitoring System and interfacing between Central and Local Image Monitoring System to the X-ray Container Scanner along with the weigh bridge and ASYCUDA World system and 5 years Operation, Maintenance and Service" has been changed as follows:

Serial Number as per Invitation Notice	Description of the content	As per tender schedule content	Amended content
6	Invitation Ref. No. & date	File- 08.01.0000.067.42.013.20 Date: 31/03/2021	File- 08.01.0000.067.82.001.20 Date: 31/03/2021
16	Tender last selling date	23/06/2021, Time-3.00pm	14/07/2021, Time-3.00pm
17	Tender closing date & time	24/06/2021 Time-3.00pm	15/07/2021 Time-3.00pm
18	Tender opening time	24/06/2021 Time-3.40pm	15/07/2021 Time-3.40pm
20	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	Conference Room, VAT Online Project, 7th Floor, 160/A, IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Date-27/05/2021, Time-11.00am. Queries will be taken in written within 20/05/2021 before 5.00pm.	Conference Room, VAT Online Project, 7th Floor, 160/A, IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Date-17/06/2021, Time-11.00am. Queries will be taken in written within 10/06/2021 before 5.00pm.
	Tender schedule	Description of the content	Existing content
	Tender Data Sheet, Page No-34	ITT 10.1	The Pre-Tender meeting shall be chaired and held: Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Conference Room, VAT Online Project, 7th Floor, 160/A, IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. City: Dhaka, Country: Bangladesh, Time: at 11.00am, Date: 27/05/2021
	Tender Data Sheet, Page No-36	ITT 36.1	The Pre-Tender meeting shall be chaired and held: Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Conference Room, VAT Online Project, 7th Floor, 160/A, IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. City: Dhaka, Country: Bangladesh, Time: at 11.00am, Date: 17/06/2021
	Tender Data Sheet, Page No-36	ITT 42.2	The deadline for submission of tenders is: Time & Date: 24/06/2021 at 3.00pm
	Tender Data Sheet, Page No-36	ITT 42.2	The deadline for opening of tenders is: Time & Date: 24/06/2021 at 3.40pm

02. All other terms and conditions of the tender document will remain unchanged.

**Zakia Sultana**  
Member (Customs: Audit, Modernization and International Trade)  
National Board of Revenue  
Phone: 8391200

GD-1066