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## Surplus production needed to increase tea export

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Srimangal

If the country is to increase its earning from tea export, it has to produce adequate exportable surplus after meeting the domestic requirement, sources in tea industry said.

Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) officials and representatives of tea garden owners said the domestic demand for tea is rising at a rate almost double the growth in production.

They were talking to a team of newsmen at Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI), Srimangal on Monday.

The country's export earning from tea dipped to 19.93 million US dollars in 1999 from 36.18 million dollars in 1998 and 40 million dollars the year before, BTB Chairman Danial Islam said.

The annual growth rate of tea production is 1.7 per cent and that of domestic consumption is 3.2 per cent, he mentioned.

Dried up foreign assistance for tea sector, non-replacement of less productive old tea plants and deterioration of law and order in tea estates were identified as the main reasons behind the country's weakening position in international tea market.

According to BTB statistics, 25 million kg of tea were exported in 1997 after meeting the domestic requirement of 25 million kg. In 1998, export fell to 22 million kg as domestic demand rose to 29 million kg.

In 1999, tea export plunged to a record low of 15 million kg while domestic consumption rose further to 32 million kg. Tea production was however badly affected by a severe drought in the year, sources concerned pointed out.

"This trend would bring a setback for our tea industry", the BTB Chairman feared.

There are 158 tea gardens in the country, 134 of those in

greater Sylhet. Tea is planted in 48,571 hectares of land. BTB sources said 20 per cent of the total area now has tea plants as old as 60 years and another 16 per cent has 40 to 60 years old plants.

"These are less productive and need re-plantation," Danial Islam said.

Besides, due to financial constraints, tea growers could not bring some 8,900 hectares of land under tea plantation, earmarked for this.

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A woman plucking leaves at a tea garden in Sylhet.  
— Star photo

## Attempt on Hasina's life ALCWC announces resistance programme

Awami League Central Working Committee yesterday condemned attempts on the life of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and called upon the people to foil all evil designs against her, reports UNB.

The call came from a meeting of the ALCWC held at Ganobhaban yesterday evening with Awami League president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

"People would not tolerate any attempt on the life of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," the meeting said in a special resolution with reference to the Kotalipara bomb incident.

It said anti-liberation and anti-democratic forces are trying to kill the daughter of Bangabandhu.

Condemning the planting of a 76-kg bomb with destructive power covering 2 sq km, the meeting said it exposed a heinous and dangerous conspiracy to kill Prime Minister Hasina.

During the period, Awami League will stage meetings and demonstrations at village, union, thana and district levels.

Besides, special prayers would be offered in all mosques, temples, churches and pagodas giving thanks to Almighty Allah for saving Sheikh Hasina's life.

On August 3, the ruling party will hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan.

### Bachchan top tax defaulter from cine world

NEW DELHI, July 25: Indian film icon Amitabh Bachchan, who hosts a wildly popular TV game show that offers millions of rupees to viewers, is the country's biggest tax defaulter from the world of cinema, a minister said today, reports AFP.

Junior Minister for Finance Dhananjay Kumar told the Upper House of parliament that Bachchan's tax arrears totalled 132 million rupees (three million dollars).

Bachchan, once described as a "one-man industry" by French director Francois Truffaut, is currently topping TV ratings as host of a version of the popular British TV show "Who wants to be a millionaire?"

Director Mukesh Bhatt was the second biggest tax defaulter, followed by Bachchan's actress wife Jaya and film actor Shah Rukh Khan, he said.

Other tax violators read like a Who's Who of the Bombay film industry, including action heroes Ajay Devgn and Sunil Shetty, top actresses Sridevi, Karishma Kapoor and Pooja Bhatt and directors Subhash Ghai, David Dhawan, Mahesh Bhatt and Ram Gopal Verma.

"The police force will be equipped with sophisticated

### Experts yet to determine nature of bombs found in Gopalganj

By Special Correspondent

BTB sources said that tea sector was benefited from financial assistance of Tk 170 crore from British and EU sources during the period 1978-93. But gradual drying up of foreign assistance affected plans for further development of tea gardens.

Representatives of Bangladeshi Cha Sangshad (BCS), apex body of tea garden owners, said they were too concerned at the fast deterioration for further examination.

An ISPR press release said last night that "considering the risk, the army personnel have taken necessary measures" regarding the second bomb at Kotalipara.

However, sources concerned failed to say how the experts transported the first bomb detected at Kotalipara to Jessor and decided to keep the second device on the spot even three days after it was discovered knowing well that the bomb may jeopardise lives of the people there.

The sources said the first explosive device "has been kept under observation" in Jessor Cantonment. It could not be known where the device has been kept given the "destructive potential" of the device. The authorities concerned also declined to give the details of the casing of the device which reportedly contained a cast iron casing of an unconventional nature.

However, an official confirmed that the first device has neither been exploded nor defused. It has only been kept under observation. No official could say how long it would be kept under observation to assess its type and composition.

**AL trying to cover up its failures, says Ershad**

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad yesterday asked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina not to blame the opposition alliance for the "attempts on her life" through planting bombs.

"But, we are yet to be sure that the bombs planted in Kotalipara were genuine... We never want to kill you, honourable prime minister. Rather, we want to defeat you in the election with a big margin and come back to power," the deposed president told a rally at Kalabagan in the city.

"Don't blame others to cover up your failures," he said.

The JP rally was organised simultaneously with three other opposition parties as part of their nationwide demonstration against the government.

Addressing the rally as the chief guest, Ershad said the law and order was at its worst saying "none, not even the prime minister is now safe."

If returns to power, he told the rally, his party will free the country from terrorism in three months, stop extortionism in one month and remove traffic jam in a week.

"The police force will be equipped with sophisticated

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**One more held**

**Hunt for killers**

in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 25: Police differed areas of the city to nab six other gunmen involved in Bahaddarhat incident that left eight people including six BCL activists killed on July 12, police said.

Earlier, police disclosed that a gang of seven Shibir-backed gunmen was involved in Bahaddarhat incident.

Of them, one Solaiman was arrested by police on Saturday night. He was placed on a seven-day remand for interrogation.

Solaiman was identified by the driver of the microbus as a member of the gang, police said.

Another FIR named accused Md Elias was arrested yesterday. CID took him on a seven-day remand.

CID police picked up Mohammed Khokan, helper of the microbus from Chanda area last night.

Khokan gave his statement before a magistrate under Section 164, CID source said.

**Police charge baton on Jamaat activists**

By Staff Correspondent

Police fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the Jamaat activists as they were demonstrating on the road in front of the northern gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday evening.

Police also charged baton on them following exchange of hot words with Jamaat leaders.

After the incident, three persons were arrested from the lane adjacent to the Housing Building Finance Corporation (HBFC).

However, none reportedly was hurt in the incident.

Later, leaders and activists of Jamaat brought out a procession in the city.

Earlier, Jamaat held a rally in front of the northern gate of Baitul Mukarram as part of the four-party alliance's simultaneous mass procession programme.

The rally was addressed among others by Jamaat Secretary General Motiur Rahman Nizami, Delwar Hossain Saidee and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid. ATM Azharul Islam presided.

Vajpayee to visit US from Sept 15

NEW DELHI, July 25: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will make a three-day state visit to the United States from September 15, the foreign ministry said today, reports Reuters.

Vajpayee will hold talks with US President Bill Clinton who was in India in March.

Clinton's visit was the first by a US president in over two decades.

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Bangabandhu murder trial

## Real culprits have not been exposed: Defence

director (military intelligence) Brigadier Salauddin made before a court of enquiry, Razzak Khan said he had informed Shaifullah that armour and artillery troops are going out of the cantonment.

"But no troops came out to resist them," the defence lawyer said. He, however, said that Brigadier Jamil had asked the force at Ganobhaban to march, but they too remained inactive.

The lawyer said: If the house of an ordinary man is attacked and he seeks help, certainly people will come forward. It was the residence of the President. He sought help. But none came. Why?

Razzak Khan quoted army chief General Shaifullah as saying to newspapers that he (Shaifullah) witnessed festivity in the 46 Brigade on August 15 morning that hurt him seriously.

"During the cross-examinations in trial court, Shaifullah didn't mention the matter in that way, but admitted that the substance of the statement was right," he said reading out from the paper book.

He also quoted PW-8 Major Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan said justice was not ensured in the case as only a partial picture of the incident was given and the real one was concealed.

In support of his contention, Razzak Khan referred to various prosecution witness accounts, including of General Shaifullah, Col Hamid and Col Shafiq Jamil, and said none came forward to save Bangabandhu although he sought help.

"Even Bangabandhu had asked army chief to send troops saving his (Shaifullah) soldiers attacked his house. But no troops came to rescue him or bar the attackers," he said putting a question 'why'.

Referring to a statement of

prosecution witnesses was considered in it.

He referred to an observation of the Federal Court put in 7 DLR (Dhaka Law Report) and said paralytic affects takes place if a judgement is one-sided.

"Justice was not ensured in this case," he said.

According to the defence lawyer, the court hearing death sentence and convicts' appeals in Bangabandhu murder case, said appeal courts can determine whether justice was ensured or not.

As Judge Kazi Golam Rasul gave the judgement of executing the death penalty through firing squad in public, which is not permitted by existing laws of the country, Razzak Khan said the learned judge was "mentally influenced".

He said it was not true that all the people were forcibly taken to radio station on August 15 and referred to PW-42 Major Ziauddin's statement that he found acting chief of Rakibul Bahrin, Hasan, ready to go to the radio station to make announcement of allegiance.

After the argument of Razzak Khan, Advocate Mahbubur Rahaman MP, defence counsel for accused Maj (Retd) Bazlul Huda began his argument.

Beginning his argument Mahbubur Rahaman described the case as a "double tragedy".

The killing was extra judicial one and depriving Huda of just and fair trial is the second tragedy. He was not given scope for self-defence. But he has been awarded capital punishment," said the defence counsel.

He said the case has two FIRs and the first one didn't name Huda. In the second one, he was inducted as he was one of the founders of Freedom Party.

Accord signed to lay gas pipeline from Habiganj to Ashuganj

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladeshi company Summit and Chinese company Daqing jointly signed an agreement yesterday with Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL), a subsidiary of Petrobangla, for laying a 55km 30-inch diameter gas pipeline from Habiganj to Ashuganj.

The agreement marked entry of a Bangladeshi investor in the gas pipeline sector for the first time, said Aziz Khan, Chairman of Summit after the simple signing ceremony held at the Uttra office of GTCL.

Eight companies including some foreign and joint venture ones participated in the inter-

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**Journalists condemn attempt on PM's life**

Journalist community yesterday condemned the attempt on the life of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits behind the heinous conspiracy, reports BSS.

In a joint statement, 128 journalists said any of the two bombs planted near the meeting venue and the helipad could have claimed hundreds of lives of the common people besides the Prime Minister.

"We have no language to condemn such types of heinous activities", the journalists said, adding the clue of the conspiracy is yet to be unmasked.

But such incident cannot be considered isolated from murders, terrorist activities and the use of bombs and explosion as let loose by a section of fanatic forces in the recent past, they

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**Humayun Zahir murder: Hearing of arguments begins**

By Court Correspondent

The hearing of arguments in the Humayun Zahir Murder Case began in the 8th Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday.

Judge Mir Mohammad Awlad Hossain