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JS team to visit Kenya to learn small-scale tea plantation technique

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A parliamentary delegation is likely to fly to Kenya early next month to gain first-hand experience about small-scale tea plantation and explore such farming prospects in Bangladesh to meet the growing tea demand.

The members of the sub-committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Commerce Ministry believe that northern Bangladesh has bright prospects of small scale tea plantation like that of Kenya, sources said.

Kenya is the first country to have developed a model of tea plantation on small patches of land. India also started such plantation practices after successful implementation of the Kenyan technique, a member of the sub-committee said.

A three-member delegation of the sub-committee recently visited two such gardens in India and is in the process of submitting a report on the outcome of the visit to the Standing Committee.

The sub-committee members would submit the report after returning from Kenya. Mohibur Rahman Manik, convenor of the three-member committee, told The Daily Star.

Labour activists protest mass Daewoo layoffs

AP, Bupyeong

Throwing rocks and firebombs, hundreds of labour activists clashed with riot police Saturday in the fifth day of violent street protests against mass layoffs at ailing Daewoo Motor Co.

Violence erupted after 4,000 riot police blocked a square where Daewoo workers and their supporters had planned to hold a mass rally.

Shouting "Cancel the layoffs!" about 800 protesters marched along a street near Daewoo's main plant in Bupyeong, 30 kilometers (18 miles) west of Seoul.

They occupied an eight-lane boulevard and burned tires, sending thick columns of smoke billowing through the snowy sky.

About 200 workers clashed with police, some swinging steel and throwing dozens of firebombs. Others broke the concrete sidewalk into fist-sized rocks and threw them at police, who deflected the missiles with interlocked shields.

Two vans mounted with loudspeakers broadcast solidarity songs and speeches denouncing a restructuring programme by the failed automaker that has resulted in a 40 per cent reduction of its workforce.

ROK unionists arrive in Paris to hunt fallen Daewoo boss

AFP, Paris

Three South Korean trade union activists arrived in Paris late Friday to track down fugitive Daewoo group founder Kim Woo-Choong, who is wanted for a multi-billion dollar fraud and embezzlement.

Upon their arrival at Paris' Roissy airport, Hwang I-Min, Yu Man-Hyung and Park Jum-Kyn, wearing red headbands inscribed in Korean, and yellow tabards with slogans in French: "Arrest Kim Woo-Choong, no to economic layoffs."

The 65-year-old Kim left South Korea just over a year ago for a meeting in China and has not been seen since.

With thousands of Daewoo workers thrown out of jobs since the collapse of the group in July 1999 with 80 billion dollars of debt, many are bitter at the slow pace of the official investigation into Kim, who was once hailed as a key architect of South Korea's economic miracle.

There have been reports of Kim staying at a villa in Nice on the French Riviera, and other reported sightings in Switzerland, Sudan and even of him staying in the same hotel as US President Bill Clinton when he was in Vietnam last year.

The South Korean trade unionists, met by French and international TV crews, chanted slogans in Korean: "Capture Kim and take back the money he stole from our company," "Condemn the South Korean government which oppresses workers".

Chittagong traders blast PSI agents for harassing importers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Chittagong-based businessmen and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday exchanged heated words over the role of the Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) companies.

Members of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at a meeting with NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan at the CCCI conference hall yesterday blasted the PSI companies.

They alleged that the PSI companies are virtually contributing nothing to the well-being of the business community, or to the national exchequer, as was expected from them.

The business community said the "dishonesty and under-hand dealings" of the PSI agents in collusion with some customs officials

have increased the harassment of the importers.

But NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan mostly deflected with the observations of the businessmen and said, "We can not expect perfection of the system overnight. It would be very ungenerous and premature to reject outright the PSI system."

The NBR chairman further said the PSI system has been introduced recently and it would need some time to rectify its loopholes. "Let us work together to make the system perfect," he urged upon the businessmen.

With CCCI President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Jamal in the chair, the discussion meeting was addressed among others by Chairman of Sanwara Corporation Nurul Islam, President of Chartered Accountants Association A K

Chowdhury, President of C&F Agents Association M Salimullah, former FBCCI member Taher Sobhan, CCCI Directors Noor Mohammad, Syed Mahmudul Haq and Prof Zahangir Chowdhury

NBR Member (customs) Abul Kashem, Senior Vice President of CCCI S M Nurul Haq and representatives of the three PSI companies were also present in the meeting.

Among the discussants, executive member of FBCCI Taher Sobhan was particularly highly critical of the PSI system.

"Ninety-nine per cent officials of PSI companies neither have the knowledge nor the capability and skills to provide correct and up-to-date information. They are working on whims," he alleged. "Please get rid of the PSI companies."

A leading chartered accountant

of the country A K Chowdhury said, "We don't understand why only three PSI companies were given the permission to cover the entire globe?"

He asked for an independent PSI auditor and suggested that 12 PSI companies be allowed to function instead of the present three.

C&F leader M Salimullah was of the view that the NBR should differentiate between the good and bad traders and act accordingly.

He alleged that the customs and port authorities lack coordination which should be resolved.

In response, NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan assured the traders that the prevailing problems regarding the PSI agents and the customs officials would be resolved one by one.



PHOTO: IDLC

Kazi Mahboob Ahmed, Managing Director of BGLC, and Naser Bukhtear Ahmed, Deputy Managing Director of Prime Bank Ltd, sign the bridge loan agreement for setting up a condom plant at DEPZ at the bank's office in the city recently. M Minhaz Zia, Head of Corporate Finance of the ID