

# Tea production likely to hit target this year

## Weather favourable, demand good, say officials

**IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet**

Tea production in the country may attain the current year's target of 57.5 million kilograms, officials in the sector hope.

A favourable weather and rainfall in the last few weeks made them hopeful.

Though the tea industry suffered a little odd situation due to unfavourable weather two months ago, the situation is better following the recent rains, they said.

An average rainfall during September-October is very good for the highly sensitive crop, Secretary of Bangladesh Tea Board told the Daily Star when contacted over phone in Chittagong.

"Tea production is good this year. The demand for our tea is also very good in the Chittagong auction. It would be hard to face the market in coming weeks due to increased foreign

demand".

He said the production target may be attained this year.

Shahiduzzaman, Director of Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI) in Srimongol, said, "Though the situation was a little different months ago, now we are hopeful of nearing this year's target".

AKM Doulatul Islam, Manager of Malnichhera Tea Estate, an established and reputed garden in Sylhet, also expressed an optimistic view.

"Weather behaved well in recent weeks compared to previous months. The pest attack is also lesser. Now, the tea industry people are more confident about a good end", he said.

"Till September-end tea production was 5 per cent ahead of target", he added.

On the other hand, foreign buyers like Pakistan are also active in Chittagongauction market, he said.

Last year, the production was 54.5 million kilograms against a target of 57 million kgs, he added.

The target could not be achieved last year due to excessive rain in the middle of the year and a drought like situation during November-December. The crop depends on nature's behaviour, he said.

There are other reasons behind failure in achieving the target last year, industry officials said.

These include mismanagement, corruption and poor labour management in many tea estates.

Moreover, productivity in most of the gardens could not be raised in the last few years. Besides, sick gardens also stand on the way of success in sector.

Though several programmes were taken to bring a 'big change' in the condition of those sick gardens during last decades, things did not move in the

right direction due to age old problems including lack of government initiatives, they said.

Tea production was much better in 2003 (58.3 million kgs) compared to last year because of average rainfall in main tea-producing regions, the officials said.

Last year (2004), the country exported 13 million kilograms of tea while 42 million kilograms were consumed in the internal market, they said. Bangladesh earns foreign exchange to the tune of around Tk 1500 million annually by exporting tea.

Tea is the largest agro-based industry in the country. There are 156 tea estates employing about 0.15 million people, which is about 3.3 per cent of the country's industrial employment. Tea sector contributes 0.81 per cent of the GDP.

## Cracks develop in roads to two bridges

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal**

Road link with Dhaka has been threatened as two major cracks developed along the slope of approach roads of Birsrestho Mohiuddin Jahangir Bridge at Doarika and Major MA Jalil Bridge at Shikarpur on the highway.

A big hole appeared on the approach road at Doarika recently after four days of incessant rains and a similar hole developed on the approach road at Shikarpur.

Sources in the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) said, non-compliance to design in construction of slope and improper maintenance of water outlets are the main reasons behind development of the cracks.

However, the RHD authorities have started necessary repair work of the cracks, they said.

China Harbor Construction Company Limited constructed both the bridges which were opened to traffic on April 4, 2003.



PHOTO: STAR

Dangerous cracks have developed in the approach road to Doakira bridge at Babuganj on the Dhaka-Barisal highway.

## Gas cylinders costlier in Sirajganj

**A CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj**

Prices of LP gas cylinders have increased by Tk 150 to 200 in Sirajganj town in last few days.

A cylinder of Jamuna Gas is selling at Tk 750 to Tk 800 against the previous price of Tk 580; Bashendhara Gas at Tk 650 to Tk 700 against Tk 560; Totalgaz at Tk. 650 to Tk. 680 against Tk 580; and Cleanheat at Tk 630 to 680 against Tk 560.

Some dealers, when contacted said the price hike is due to short supply of cylinders.

But other sources claimed that with the beginning of Ramandan, dealers formed a cartel and are charging prices at will.

One dealer on condition of anonymity said some unscrupulous dealers are selling cylinders in the black market after lifting their quotas. They bring lesser number of gas cylinders to Sirajganj town.

Talking to this correspondent, some consumers said prices of gas cylinders are have gone beyond the buying capacity of middle income groups, most of whom have become dependent on gas cylinders as there is no pipeline supply of the fuel in the district.

## Flag meet held in Akhaura

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria**

A flag meeting between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) was held on Akhaura border on Monday.

Both the teams agreed to curb smuggling and cross-border crime, BDR sources said.

The Bangladesh side was led by BDR No 1 Battalion Commander Lt Col Sayed Quamruzzaman and the Indian side was led by BSF No 22 Battalion Commander Col SK Taygi.

The meeting was told that BSF personnel won't shoot at any Bangladeshi villager, but will go for legal steps against the infiltrators.

BSF gunned down four Bangladeshis on Akhaura border between April 16 and September 30.

## Militants' bombs now look like cell phones!

### Khulna police gear up checking

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Persons carrying cell phones in court areas are being checked in Khulna and Bagerhat. Wristwatches are not also being spared from checking by police plainclothes police.

When asked, Bagerhat Police Superintendent Md Mostafa Kamal told this correspondent that the measures have been taken as Islamist extremists have threatened to attack courts and explode bombs any time. There is an information with police that Islamist extremists are carrying bombs which look like cell phone or wrist watch.

Khulna and Bagerhat courts have been put on red alert on receipt of this information that Islamist extremists have made bombs in the shape of cell phone. This type of bombs are being carried by 'suicide squads' of JMB and Harkatul Jihad, said a source in Bagerhat district police administration.

Cell phone and wristwatch shops in court areas in Bagerhat were searched by plainclothes police.

"We think Islamist extremists may adopt a new tactic to attack their targeted places", Bagerhat Police Superintendent said.

Meanwhile, security has been tightened in and around offices of the Divisional Commissioner and the DIG of Khulna Range as Islamist extremists have threatened them with death.

Extra security measures have been taken to guard all Puja Mandops in Khulna city and in the division following the fresh threat given to Divisional Commissioner and the DIG.



PHOTO: STAR

Durga Puja being celebrated in a festive mood at a temple in Dinajpur.

# Half of RU teachers do part-time jobs outside

## Academic activities seriously hampered

**ABU KALAM, RU**

Academic activities in Rajshahi University (RU) are being seriously hampered as over 400 teachers are engaged in part-time jobs or consultancy services.

Of the 926 teachers in the university, 380 are professors, 162 associate professors, 327 assistant professors and 129 lecturers.

Among them, more than 300 teachers are doing part-time jobs in private universities and another 100 are consultants engaged with different NGOs.

As a result, students are being deprived of teaching and guidance.

Sources said, out of the 400 teachers, over 200 do not have any permission from authorities to work outside the campus.

According to a Syndicate decision taken on August 2001, a teacher can avail only one job outside with permission from the authorities. But most of the teachers are engaged in more than one job, the sources said.

In many departments, students on many occasions protested what they called absence of teachers from departments for long.

Ismail Hossain, a student of Finance and Banking, said many teachers of the department remained absent without any prior notice. Some teachers even do not attend classes regularly though they are seen on the campus.

According to RU Academic Committee rules, a Professor should take at least 10 classes a week, an Associate Professor 14 classes, an Assistant Professor 16 classes a week.

But this is not followed.

Sources in the RU administration said, teachers working outside even do not feel the necessity to take permission from the authorities.

Zanatul Ferdus, a student of Mass Communication, alleged that most of the teachers in the department are engaged in consultancy and NGO activities and they often miss scheduled classes.

Abdul Wahid, a teacher in Business Faculty told this correspondent that many of the teachers are compelled to work outside because of poor salary at RU.

When contacted, Registrar Prof Abdus Salam said it is not a problem if any teacher does another job after properly doing his duty at Rajshahi university.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Ahsania Mission officials handing over former camel jockey Iqbal to his parents Abul Kalam and Parul Begum at Lalmohon in Bhola.

## Home, sweet home...

### Six camel jockeys return to families

**STAR NATIONAL DESK**

The Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has rehabilitated six camel jockeys brought home from the Middle East to their families in Lalmohan and Char Fashion upazillas in Bhola district.

Gazi Nazrul Islam Faisal, Deputy Director, Programme Division and Lulu Bilkis Khanam, Programme Coordinator, Child and Woman Trafficking Prevention Programme of DAM handed over the children to their parents at two functions held Lalmohan and Char Fashion on October 8, said a press release here yesterday.

The children are Iqbal, Rubel, Mohammad Hossain, Rasel, Alam and Javed. Local UNOs Nischinta Kumar

Poddar and Sirajul Islam, Union Parishad chairmen and members, upazila education officers and the elite from the two upazilas were present on the occasion.

Two Community Care committees were constituted in the two upazilas with local woman ward member as convenors to oversee well being of the children and report to the UNOs time to time.

The children were brought back home by the Ministry of Home Affairs in cooperation with Unicef on September 6. They were placed under the care of DAM at Zia International Airport, which sheltered them at its Transit Home in Dhaka city. There are 12 more children at the Transit Home, awaiting reunion with their families.