

Tea production falls, export earnings decline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Tea production declined by about 12 per cent while export earnings from it fell by 47 per cent in the last financial year compared to those in the previous year.

The production was 53 million kilograms in FY 2006 against 60 million kilograms in FY 2005, according to sources in the tea industry in Moulvibazar, a major tea producing area in the country.

The country exported about 47 million kilograms in the last financial year, down from the previous year's 60 million kilograms.

The earnings fell by around 47 per cent, from Tk 742.62 million in 2005 to Tk 469.59 million last year, the sources said.

On the other hand, domestic consumption is increasing. The country may have to import tea within few years if this situation continues, the sources apprehended.

They said the main cause of fall in production last year was drought in the tea producing belt. Out of about 160 tea gardens in the country, 123 are in Moulvibazar district.

Tea export has been declining over the last several years. Quoting

Bangladesh Tea Board officials, the sources said that fall in production, rise in domestic demand and price hike at home are the main causes of fall in export.

Foreign buyers can not compete with domestic buyers who offer higher prices at tea auction market in Chittagong, they said.

Supply of tea to the auction market has also declined due to production shortfall.

In 2006, tea price rallied around Tk 104 per kg in Chittagong auction market while it was Tk 78 in the previous year.

An official of the auction market

said arrival of the commodity at the auction market also declined due fall in production.

There is an agreement with Pakistan to supply 10 million kilograms of tea every year but it could not be fulfilled in last financial year, they said.

Talking to this correspondent, tea industry sources said the domestic demand will up further and if the trend continues, Bangladesh will turn into a tea importing country if comprehensive steps are not taken involving the government and garden owners to increase production.

Joint forces meet Rangpur traders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Officials of joint forces exchanged views with local business leaders at a meeting here yesterday.

They discussed ways to contain the price spiral, meeting sources said.

Lt. Col. Mahabub Alam Zakaria, chief of joint forces in Rangpur, told the meeting that law enforcers will not harass any businessman if they do not resort to earn profit at the cost of rights of people.

He advised business leaders to organise monitoring cells in different areas of the town to keep a watch on the market and to keep the government aware of the trend.

He said none should try to manipulate prices by hoarding or any other means.

President of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mostafa Azad Chowdhury, its leaders Mohammad Jahangir, Rangpur Zila Dokan Malik Samiti Saiful Islam and some other business leaders spoke in the meeting held at Rangpur stadium auditorium.



PHOTO: STAR

5-day scouts camp begins in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A five-day national scouts camp styled Community Development Camp began at Cox's Bazar sea beach yesterday, marking centenary of scouting in Bangladesh.

Dr. Shah Mohammad Farid, president of Bangladesh Scouts, was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony.

Dr. Wakil Ahmed, Vice-chancellor of National University, was the special guest. M Fazlur Rahman, Chief National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts, presided over. DC Mohammad Aminul Islam also spoke.

About 3500 scouts and rover scouts are attending the camp. Thirty-one scouts and rover scouts will be given awards for helping community development.



PHOTO: STAR

Scouts presenting a display at the inaugural function at the Community Development Camp at Cox's Bazar sea beach yesterday.

27 Indians pushed back in Dinajpur

BDR, BSF trade fire on Satkhira border

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday pushed back 27 Bangla speaking Indian nationals, earlier pushed in by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) through Mohanpur border in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

In Satkhira, BSF and BDR traded heavy gunfire on Chanduria border in Kalaroa upazila early yesterday.

BDR sources in Dinajpur said BSF of Kamdevpur camp across the border pushed in 27 Indian nationals including women and

children through main pillar no. 308 at around 5am yesterday. After being pushed in, the Indians went to the nearby village.

BDR of 15 Rifles Battalion picked up the 27 people from the village and pushed them back to Indian territory at around 7:00 pm, BDR sources said.

BDR remained on guard against any renewed attempt to push them into Bangladesh again, the sources said.

Quoting some of the victims, BDR sources said the Indians were

gathered from New Delhi and brought at Kamdevpur border outpost Friday night.

Locals in Mohanpur village near the border said many of the 27 people had Indian ration cards and they had been living in New Delhi for about 25 years.

BDR has been put on alert after the incident, BDR sources said.

On contact, Lt. Col. Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf, Commanding Officer of 41 Rifles Battalion confirmed the exchange of fire.

JP leader, Chhatra Dal cadre arrested in Meherpur, Sirajganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Joint forces have arrested a Chhatra Dal cadre in Sirajganj and a Jatiya Party (Nazir) leader in Meherpur on charge of terrorising rivals and corruption.

Alleged criminal and Chhatra Dal cadre Sharif Ahmed Jinnah was arrested Friday night from Muktarpara area in Sirajganj town, our correspondent reports.

Sharif, 27, is the son of local BNP leader Abdul Mannan of Diardhangora (Sardarpura) area in the town. He is also a local correspondent of Dhaka based newspaper.

Acting on a tip-off, joint forces raided the office of local weekly Dolon Champa and arrested him, police said.

Police said Sharif is an accused in 18 criminal cases including some for robbery, toll collection and mugging.

They said Sharif was a 'top terror' of Sirajganj town and a cadre of the

immediate past BNP lawmaker.

In Meherpur, joint forces yesterday arrested SK Sayeed, district convener of Jatiya party (Nazir) and a close aide to former BNP lawmaker from Meherpur-I constituency Masud Arun, a correspondent reports.

He was arrested from in front of BNP office in the town in the afternoon.

He was being interrogated by joint forces at their camp at Meherpur Zila Parishad rest house when the report was filed in the afternoon. He faces criminal charges, police said.

They said he was also wanted by police during the Operation Clean Heart in 2003 but had gone into hiding.

Sources said, earlier, Sayeed had threatened some local journalists in 2003, following which a general diary was filed by Meherpur Press Club President Atiqur Rahman Titu.

4x3

RU Dean, Syndicate elections demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Progressive Teachers Society (PTS), an association of Rajshahi University teachers aligned with Awami League yesterday met the vice-chancellor at his office and demanded declaration of schedule for Dean and Syndicate elections.

They told VC Prof Altaf Hossain that academic activities in all the 47 departments lost momentum as the tenure of deans of seven faculties have expired.

They also told him that tenure of university Syndicate expired on February 22 and that of dean committee on February 25.

The elections should be held immediately as per provision of the University Act of 1973.

They gave the VC to declare election schedules by March 25.

PTS convener and Syndicate member Prof Abdus Sobhan at a

press briefing later at his office said a number of important decisions regarding academic curriculum are pending as the old dean committee has no provision to execute any decision because its tenure has expired.

Prof Anando Kumar Shaha, a Senate member said as per the University Act, the university authorities are empowered to declare election schedules and they do not require permission from higher authorities for this.

Prof Mokhlesur Rahman, Prof Faykuzzaman, Prof Mahbubur Rahman, Ananda Kumar Saha, Professor Nurullah and Prof Shamsuddin Ilas were also present during the meeting with the VC.

When contacted RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain said, "We will seek directive from higher authorities about holding the elections".

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12x3



PHOTO: STAR

A child rendering a song at a cultural function held at KB College auditorium at Isapura in Munshiganj, marking the fourth founding anniversary of local Agbibina Cultural Academy.