

Weather cuts into tea production

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet.

Tea production in the country fell by at least half a million kilograms in the first seven months of this year from the same period a year ago.

The reasons behind the fall were unpredictable weather conditions and frequent power cuts, industry insiders said.

Mukul Jyoti Dutta, director of Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI), told The Daily Star yesterday that the shortfall might be covered if things go well during the rest of the season.

However, it would not be possible to make a recovery in case the temperature drops too low, tea researchers apprehended.

The BTRI chief said tea is a climate-sensitive crop that needs uniform rainfall and sunshine and conditions were favourable in the past few years.

Mohd Safwan Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Tea Association, a forum of tea garden owners, said total production stood at 21.9 million kilograms in January-July, which was 22.4 million kilograms in the same period last year. The target for August also could not be met, he added.

Most tea producing areas, including the Juri and Lashkarpur valleys, suffered a drought like situation, while some areas, like northern Sylhet, experienced better rainfall this year, the tea planter said.

Chowdhury said this special crop

needs an even distribution of rainfall, which was absent this year, and the region experienced frequent temperature fluctuations.

He expressed concern over the major tea producing zones that are becoming seemingly drought prone. The period from May to October is the most promising for tea harvests.

Mohammad Shahjahan, manager of Somonbagh Tea Estate, a leading tea garden, said most gardens began to pluck tea leaves late March or early April -- a delay of three to four weeks.

"We failed to begin irrigation in March-April as the natural water sources dried up because of the prolonged drought," he said.

In recent years, the highest tea production in Bangladesh was recorded at 60.14 million kilograms in 2005, as the crop enjoyed favourable weather conditions throughout the season.

The country's target this year is 60 million kilograms. Production in 2009 stood at 59.24 million kilograms.

Tea, an important cash crop for Bangladesh, has grown to be one of the largest agro-based industries. Outside the seven newly established, small tea holdings, there are 162 full-fledged tea gardens with an annual production capacity of about 55 to 60 million kilograms.

About two-thirds of production is consumed at home, while the rest is exported. Exports, however, are on the downturn with a rise in home consumption, officials said.



Back row from left, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid; Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain; China's Yunnan province Governor Qin Guangrong and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Xianyi are seen at the signing of one of the four memorandums of understanding between Bangladesh and Yunnan province, at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Additional Education Secretary SM Ghulam Farooque, seated right, signs the deal on behalf of Bangladesh. (Story on page 1)



Unpredictable weather conditions and frequent power cuts left a negative impact on the country's tea production this year.

Vodafone to sell China Mobile stake

AFP, London

British mobile phone giant Vodafone is to sell its shares in China Mobile to raise more than four billion pounds (6.2 billion dollars, 4.9 billion euros), a newspaper reported Sunday.

The deal with China Telecom, the world's biggest telecom operator, is expected to be the first in a series of planned sell-offs Vodafone will make in the coming months, according to the Sunday Times.

The deal is expected to be rubber-stamped next month, although Vodafone is deciding whether to seek a strategic investor for the stake or sell the shares on the Hong Kong stock market, where China Mobile is listed, the report said.

A Vodafone spokeswoman told AFP the claim was "speculation" and the company would make no further comment.

Vodafone chief executive Vittorio Colao is taking an increasingly hardline on sell-offs, stressing to investors that the business -- which once aimed to become "the Coca-Cola of mobile" -- was now focusing on Europe, Asia and India.

The company favours the China sale over disposals of its part-owned assets in France and United States because the only likely buyer in those countries is the controlling shareholder, which would depress the likely price.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
 Ministry of Communications
 Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB)
 12-13th Floor (East Block), Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka-1000
 No-DTCB/Study Project/267(P-3)/2010 Date: 23/08/2010

Sub: Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for appointment of Individual Local Junior Consultant to Work as Transport Management Consultant

Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB), under the Ministry of Communications (MOC), has been allocated Tk. 17.92 million only (US\$ 026 million) by the government towards the cost of implementing approved study project named "Study for Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Enhancement of Transport Related Agencies as Identified in STP" and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of the fund towards payments for an Local Junior Consultant who will work under the Team Leader for a period of 6 (six) to 8 (eight) months with immediate effect to work with 2 (two) other Consultants and 1 (one) Senior Consultant.

- TOR of the consultant are as follows:**
- i) Review all earlier reports including STP on urban transport development and identify shortcomings of the reports, if any. The management consultant will recommend essential changes for the agencies in respect of modernization of urban transportation.
 - ii) Detail investigation of the capacity of the key agencies such as DCC, DTCB, BRTA, RAJUK, DMP will be carried by the management consultant. Agencies like BIWTC, BR, BRTC, RHD, LGED and DOE will also be investigated with a view to upgrade their capacity on urban transport system.
 - iii) Examination of existing management structure of the agencies and recommend necessary measures for a revised and new management structure with a view to enhance transport management capacity of the agencies.
 - iv) Defining and vitalizing of future role of the agencies concerned in term of strategic transport development.
 - v) Investigate the existing service rules, regulations, organograms etc. of the agencies and recommend measures for improvement.
 - vi) Consultant will make specific recommendations for strengthening institutions related to DMA transport system.
 - vii) Appropriate measures should be recommended for unification of land use planning and transport planning under an unitary authority for the sake of an efficient urban transportation in DMA.
 - viii) Measures should be recommended on the legal bindings and enactment of rules, if needed for co-operation and co-ordination among the related agencies.
 - ix) Most of the transport related agencies suffer from lack of specialists with sufficient experiences in urban public transport planning and modeling. Management consultants will recommend measures on equipping each agencies with such specialists.
 - x) Measures should be recommended for equipping the agencies with logistics and modern equipments so that they can discharge their responsibilities efficiently and timely.
 - xi) Necessary measures be recommended for local and overseas training on modern urban transport development.
 - xii) DTCB, as the secretariat on urban transportation, should develop a data base. Appropriate measures will be recommended on it by the consultant.

The project is essentially one in which the selected consultant will identify the role of the particular agency and will then define the needs (in term of staffing and organization) that will be required to enable the agency to perform the necessary responsibilities.

Qualification & Experience of the Consultant:
 Masters in Transport Studies/Transport Engineering/Urban Planning/Civil Engineering or equivalent degree from a recognized university with 12 years experiences in Urban Transport Management in urban studies. Proven experiences of work on institutional capacity building of urban transport management and development is necessary. Proficiency in computer operation is required.

Duration of Consultancy : 6 (six) to 8 (eight) months from the date of contract signing.

Salary : Interested candidates are requested to indicate expected amount of monthly salary including internal tax & VAT (15% of total salary (approx)) which is negotiable.

Last date of submission of EOI : 09/09/2010 (within office hour). Interested candidates are requested to enclose two recent PP size photographs along with a copy of complete CV with related documents.

For any query please contact the undersigned.

Automakers to launch new models, spend more in India

REUTERS, New Delhi

Global automakers in India are planning to launch new models and boost investment in the country, executives said at a conference, signalling brisk demand in one of the fastest growing car markets in the world.

French car maker Renault's Indian unit will launch five cars between mid-2011 and mid-2013, including small cars in 2012, its India head said at an industry conference on Thursday.

Toyota's India unit expects to sell 63,000-64,000 Etios compact cars in 2011, Deputy Managing Director Sandeep Singh said. The Etios has been designed specifically for the Indian market and will be launched towards the end of 2010.

The compact car segment in India, with cars measuring between 3.4 to 4 metres in length, is rapidly expanding and accounts for more than 70 percent of the total car market.

Narrow roads, heavy traffic and lower prices make compact cars attractive to the country's rising middle class that is looking for ways to spend its increased disposable income amid

galloping economic growth.

India is seeing a near 35 percent growth in car sales with more than half a million cars already sold in the first four months of 2010/11.

Renault's small cars will be built on alliance partner Nissan's platform, Country General Manager Marc Nassif said. The cars produced at its manufacturing unit in the southern Indian city of Chennai, built jointly with Nissan, will be Renault-branded, and would be competitively priced, he said.

Though top carmaker Maruti Suzuki still holds sway, global majors such as Toyota, Honda, General Motors, Volkswagen and Ford are eyeing the lucrative small-car sector.

Maruti Suzuki, in which Japan's Suzuki Motor Corp holds a 54.2 percent stake, is seeing strong sales in August, its marketing and sales chief Mayank Pareek said.

General Motors' Chevrolet Beat and Ford's Figo compact cars have already seen runaway sales so far this year.

Nissan, which is 44 percent owned by Renault, has started selling its compact Micra

cars since June.

Separately, Renault-Nissan is working with Indian two-wheeler maker Bajaj Auto to make a low-cost car, which would be designed by Bajaj and launched by end-2012.

Joe Hinrichs, Ford's president for the Asia Pacific region and Africa, said the company expects an opportunity to expand capacity in India as the market grows.

Ford, which had earlier announced a \$500 million investment for India, will need fresh investments if it expands capacity.

The company is planning to introduce eight new vehicles in India by the middle of the decade and will start exporting its best-selling compact Figo cars from India to 50 new markets next year, including Mexico, north African countries and the United Arab Emirates.

"We are making a bigger bet in India," Hinrichs said.

The Indian car unit of Honda will launch a compact car in the second half of 2011 and will initially roll it out of its facility near New Delhi.



Mohammad Solaiman, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd, presides over the bank's 10th extraordinary general meeting in Dhaka on Saturday.

Buffett has eyes on British insurance

AFP, London

US billionaire Warren Buffett is interested in buying Royal Bank of Scotland's insurance business Direct Line, a report said Sunday.

Spiralling claims from car accidents have led to heavy losses at RBS's insurance arm and the bank has brought in a team of advisors to help sell the business, according to the Sunday Times.

RBS -- which is 83-percent state-owned after being bailed out by the British government -- has been ordered by the European Commission to sell Direct Line to fall into line with competition rules.

Berkshire Hathaway, the investment vehicle owned by Buffett, is among a clutch of potential bidders interested in the business, the Sunday Times reported. US insurer Allstate has also expressed an interest, it was claimed.