

Vietnam rice boom heaping pressure on farmers, environment

AFP, Can Tho, Vietnam

Rice farmer Nguyen Hien Thien is so busy growing his crops that he has never even visited Can Tho, a town only a few miles from his farm in the southern Mekong Delta.

"When I was a child, we grew one crop of rice per year -- now it's three. It's a lot of work," 60-year-old Thien, who has been farming since he was a child, told AFP on the edge of his small paddy field.

Experts say Vietnam's drive to become one of the world's leading rice exporters is pushing farmers in the fertile delta region to the brink, with mounting costs to the environment.

The communist country is already the world's second largest exporter of the staple grain. But intensive rice cultivation, particularly the shift to producing three crops per year, is taking its toll on farmers and the ecosystem.

"Politicians want to be the world's number one or two rice exporter. As a scientist, I want to see more being done to protect farmers and the environment," said Vietnamese rice expert Vo Tong Xuan.

A major famine in 1945 and food shortages in the post-war years led to the government adopting a "rice first" policy.

This now generates far more of the crop than needed to feed Vietnam's 90 million population and has catalysed a thriving export industry.

Rice yields have nearly quadrupled since the 1970s, official figures show, thanks to high-yield strains and the construction of a network of dykes that



Vietnamese farmers walk on a rice field in the southern Mekong delta province of Can Tho.

AFP

today allow farmers to grow up to three crops per year.

The amount of land under cultivation in the Mekong Delta has also expanded and quotas are in place to prevent farmers from switching to other crops.

But experts are questioning who really benefits.

According to Xuan, farmers don't reap the rewards of the three crop system -- the rice is low quality and they spend more on pesticides and fertilisers, which become less effective year by year.

He argues the delta would be better off if farmers cultivated a more diverse range of crops, from coconuts to prawns, with just the most suitable land used to grow rice.

The country should consider

abandoning the third crop and focus on improving quality and branding to sell Vietnamese rice at higher prices, he said.

Currently, the bulk of Vietnam's rice is exported at cut-price costs on government-to-government contracts through large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) like the Southern Food Corporation, known as Vinafood 2.

"Over the last five years, the trend is towards lower-quality rice," admitted Le Huu Trang, deputy office manager at the firm.

Some argue that such SOEs have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo as they earn lucrative kickbacks from the huge contracts.

But even as salt water intrusion,

drought and flooding increase in the delta -- to say nothing of agricultural chemical pollution -- it is also hard to convince farmers to change.

"The prevailing mindset is to grow three crops... we have to explain two crops is better," said Nguyen Tuan Hiep from the Co Do Agriculture company.

Over the last 20 years, Co Do -- which is state-run but a flagship model of how the industry could evolve -- has identified the best rice-growing land in the delta and helped farmers expand their farms.

They now work with 2,500 families on 5,900 hectares (14,600 acres) of land, enough for each family to make a living -- typically the average rice farm in

the delta spans less than one hectare.

The firm invests heavily in high-quality seeds and improving irrigation, while also advising farmers on the best chemicals to use.

"Two crops is more sustainable long term -- the soil is not degraded, the environment isn't polluted, and value of the rice increases," Hiep said.

Climate change is another factor threatening the delta, according to the World Bank Group's vice president and special envoy for climate change Rachel Kyte.

"This is really ground zero for some of the most difficult adaptation, planning challenges that any country in the world has," she said.

Ultimately Vietnam has tough choices to make, including whether to help people transition from a rice-based economy to aquaculture (fish or shellfish farming) or other crops, Kyte added.

The environmental costs of maintaining Vietnam's current level of rice production are also rising.

The system of dykes, which blocks flood water, are preventing soil nutrients from flowing freely and over time "soil fertility will fade", said Tran Ngoc Thac, deputy director of Vietnam's Rice Research Institute.

Scientists there are busy trying to breed new strains of rice that require fewer fertilisers and can survive in extreme weather.

"If farmers don't change, if we can't find a suitable new rice strain, pollution will continue and incomes will drop," Thac said, adding these measures were essential to save the delta.

For Britain's poorest, food aid becomes a way of life

AFP, Camborne, UK

Clutching a bag of pasta, canned pears and beef, David Kirk leaves a food bank in one of Britain's poorest corners -- his sixth visit in a few weeks.

"It's certainly a big help," the tattooed 54-year-old said as he loaded the free supplies into his car in the town of Camborne in Cornwall in the southwest of England.

"My wife has been diagnosed with cancer and I'm not able to work at the moment," Kirk said.

The growing numbers of Britons turning to food banks run by charities to get by has become a key political issue weeks from a May 7 general election.

The first question thrown at Prime Minister David Cameron in a prime time television grilling on Thursday was about how many food banks had sprung up during his five years in power.

Cameron replied, saying his government had created jobs to lift people out of poverty and rejected the idea of a "broken Britain".

But the reality looks different at a food bank in the backroom of a church in Camborne on a peninsula famous for its beaches, holiday homes and rich history.

It is less known for being one of the country's poorest regions, with average wages of around £14,300 (20,000 euros, \$21,300) a year -- five times lower than in London, according to European Union data.

Near a piano covered with a blanket and old Bibles, volunteers fill bags with vegetables, tea, rice and other staples.

Nicola Bacca, 32, came with her daughter and said her benefits had been cut "through no fault of our own".

"That left us with very little money," said Bacca, who has four children and complained that all of her money was used up paying bills. "Food is the final thing on the list and with four children? You got to feed them."

The Camborne food bank opened in 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis.

But rather than becoming less frequented as the economy has strengthened, the opposite has happened, according to its 70-year-old founder Don Gardner.

"The first month we did about 150 meals," Gardner said. "Now it's 2,000 meals on average. Weekly."

A former tin-producing town, Camborne has never truly recovered from the closure of its mines -- their remains still visible under encroaching vegetation.

The poverty here is no anomaly. Britain has at least 850 food banks and more and more are opening every year, according to a parliamentary inquiry into hunger in the country released last year.

Over the 2013-2014 tax year, the Trussell Trust, which runs around 400 food banks, served meals to 913,000 people, compared to 61,500 in 2010-2011.



RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited

RAK Tower (7th, 8th & 9th Floor), Plot # 1/A, Jasimuddin Avenue, Sector # 3, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka - 1230

REVISED NOTICE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Further to our earlier notice issued on March 02, 2015, this revised notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited will be held on Monday, April 20, 2015 at 10.00 am at International Convention City, Bashundhara (Pushpoguscho), Joarshahara, Purbachal Link Road, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh to transact the following businesses and, if deem fit, to adopt the following resolutions as special resolutions as proposed by the Board of Directors:

AGENDA:

- 1) To consider amendment/alteration of Article-90 of the Article of Association of the Company regarding the Board meeting attendance fee of the directors.

Proposed special resolution:

"RESOLVED that the Article-90 of the Articles of Association of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited regarding the Board meeting attendance fee of the Directors shall be amended as proposed below:

Article No.	Existing Provision	Proposed
90	The Directors shall be entitled to a fee of Tk. 500/- (Taka Five hundred) only each for each meeting of the Board of Directors and/or Committee of Directors attended by them.	Each Director shall be entitled to a fee for each meeting of the Board of Directors and/or any Committee of Directors attended as may be determined by the Board of Directors from time to time.

- 2) To consider addition of a new Article, Article-106A after the Article-106 of the Article of Association of the Company for holding the meeting of the Board of Directors and/or committee of Directors by using modern communication means such as telephonic conference calls or video conferencing.

Proposed Special Resolution:

"Article-106A: The meetings of the Board of Directors and/or any Committee of Directors of the Company could be held by using modern communication means such as telephonic conference calls or video conferencing subject to the following conditions:

- a. The director(s) shall attend personally at least 4(four) meetings of the Board in every year;
- b. The director(s) who shall attend the meetings of the Board of Directors and/or any Committee of Directors by using modern communication means such as telephonic conference calls or video conferencing shall not be considered for quorum of the meeting;
- c. The decisions of the meetings of the Board of Directors and/or any Committee of Directors held by using modern communication means shall be ratified in a meeting of the Board of Directors where the directors are personally present;
- d. The procedure for attending and participating in a meeting of the Board of Directors by using modern communication means shall be decided by the Board of Directors.
- e. All information/ documents/ notices including notice of the meeting may be sent to the directors before the meeting in hard copies or by secure email (i.e. email sent by the Company) to the director's email address notified to the Company;
- f. The video footage and /or the telephonic conversations of a meeting of the Board of Directors where modern communication means are used shall be recorded and saved."

All members are requested to attend the meeting on the date, time and place as mentioned above.

Place: Dhaka
Date: March 29, 2015

By order of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
(Muhammad Shahidul Islam FCS)
Company Secretary

Notes:

1. The Members whose name appeared in the Share Register of the Company or in the Depository Register on the 'Record Date' (i.e. February 17, 2015) will be entitled to attend and vote in the meeting.
2. A member entitled to attend and vote at the Extraordinary General Meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his/her behalf (such proxy shall be a shareholder of the Company). The Proxy Form, duly filled and stamped, must be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company not later than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
3. Admission to the meeting will be strictly on production of the attendance slip.
4. In case of non-receipt of the Notice of the Company sent through courier, Members may collect the same from the Registered Office of the Company within April 16, 2015.

Members may please note that no food or gift or benefit in cash or kind shall be given at the Extraordinary General Meeting.



Bangladesh Power Development Board Invitation for International Tender

বিদ্যুৎ সশ্রয়ী বাতি ব্যবহার করুন

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Power Division.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB).
3	Procuring entity name	Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, Dhaka.
4	Procuring entity code	Not used at present.
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka, Bangladesh.
6	Invitation for	Procurement of HGPI Spare Parts for GT Unit No. 3 of Fenchuganj CCPP, BPDB, Sylhet.
7	Invitation Ref. No.	Pur-323/2015.
8	Date	24-03-2015.

KEY INFORMATION

9 Procurement method Open tendering method (single stage one envelope).

FUNDING INFORMATION

10 Budget and source of funds Revenue Budget (Cash Foreign Exchange Allocation) of BPDB.
11 Development partners (if applicable) Not applicable.

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

12	Project/programme code (if applicable)	Not applicable.
13	Project/programme name (if applicable)	Not applicable.
14	Tender package No.	GR-6 (FY: 2014-2015).
15	Tender package name	Procurement of HGPI Spare Parts for GT Unit No. 3 of Fenchuganj CCPP, BPDB, Sylhet.
16	Tender publication date	24/03/2015.
17	Tender last selling date	13-05-2015 during office hours.
18	Tender closing date and time	14/05/2015 at 11:00am (Tender can be submitted on any date before closing time during office hours).
19	Tender opening date and time	14-05-2015 at 11:30am.
20	Name & address of the office	Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), 12, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
	Selling tender document (principal)	Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), 12, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
	Selling tender document (others)	Not applicable.
	Receiving tender document	Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), 12, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
	Opening tender document	Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), 12, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
21	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	Not applicable.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

22	Eligibility of tenderer	Tenderers from all countries except the countries specified in TDS.
23	Brief description of goods or works	Procurement of HGPI Spare Parts for GT Unit No. 3 of Fenchuganj CCPP, BPDB, Sylhet.
24	Brief description of related services	As per tender document.
25	Tender document price	Non-refundable BD Taka 5,000/- (five thousand) only in the form of Pay Order in favour of Director, Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, Dhaka.

26	Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount	Completion time
	Nil	Procurement of HGPI Spare Parts for GT Unit No. 3.	Fenchuganj CCPP, BPDB, Sylhet	USD 50,000.00 BDT 40,00,000.00	180 days from the date of opening of L/C

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

27	Validity of tender and tender security	120 & 148 days respectively from tender opening date.
28	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Abu Yousuf.
29	Designation of official inviting tender	Director.
30	Address of official inviting tender	Directorate of Purchase, BPDB, WAPDA Building (9th Floor), 12, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
31	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 9550532, 9568132, Fax: 7126151.
32	Special instructions	The purchaser reserves the right to accept any tender to annul the tender process or to reject any or all tenders at any time prior to contract award.

The tender will be performed according to "The Public Procurement Rules-2008".

Md. Abu Yousuf
ID No. 1-0679
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka
Biddiyut/Jana-952(4)/25/3/15
GD-1131