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Export target for tea fixed at 7 crore pounds

By A Staff Reporter

The export target for tea during the next fiscal year (1980-81) has been set at seven crore pounds with an estimated earning of Taka 70 crore in foreign exchange, according to the tea policy for 1980-81.

Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiky, Minister of State for Commerce announced the tea policy at a Press conference held at a local hotel on Saturday.

In view of "shortfall in production, slack demand and resource constraint in some of the major importing countries" there will be a shortfall of over 22 per cent in the projected export earning for the current fiscal year (1979-80).

The production target for tea during 1980-81 has been set at eight crore 60 lakh pounds which represents a 9.4 per cent increase over the actual production during the current fiscal year.

While reviewing the tea production and tea export during 1979-80 Mr Siddiky said that the actual production during the current year had been seven crore 64 lakh and 40 thousand pounds as against the target for production of 8 crore 65 lakh pounds. The unprecedented drought during the early part of the current year had been

mainly responsible for the shortfall in tea production, he said. He said that during 14 months of the current fiscal year, four crore 54 lakh pounds of tea had been exported as against the export target set for the year at seven crore 50 lakh pounds.

The export earning during 18 months was Taka 44.49 crore as against the projected earning of Taka 75 crore, he said.

Mr Siddiky said that with utmost effort, it might be possible to reach an export figure of five crore 60 lakh pounds worth about 58 crore taka by the end of the current year.

He said that in the tea policy for the next fiscal year, the major thrust was on production with a greater emphasis on increasing the per acre yield. He said that increase in the per acre production of tea had been

Con. on page 18 col. 1

Tea export

Continued from page 1
come imperative in view of decelerating trend in the price of tea in the world market as against the rising cost of production.

DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION

The domestic consumption during 1980-81 has been projected at one crore 85 lakh pounds showing an increase of 2.8 per cent over the estimated domestic consumption of 1.80 lakh pounds during the current year (1979-80).

Of the export target set for 1980-81, six crore 70 lakh pounds are proposed to be exported in the form of loose tea and 30 lakh pounds in the form of packet tea. Mr Siddiky said that there had been some breakthrough during the current year in the export of packet tea. As against the export of 1,70,000 pounds of tea during 1978-79, the export of packet tea during 10 months of the current year was 6,09,000 pounds.

Under the tea policy for 1980-81, consignment sale to London auction would not require

prior permission of Tea Board, Mr Siddiky said.

He said that all out efforts would be required for achieving the target set for production and export of tea during 1980-81. Speedy implementation of intensive cultivation and re-planting schemes would help increase production, he observed adding that tea gardens would be required to implement the development schemes of a priority basis to achieve rapid increase in tea production.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr Siddiky said that under the development plan for the tea gardens, 130 gardens had already been surveyed and development projects for 45 gardens had also been approved.

He told a questioner that the cost of production of a pound of tea had increased by about 75 to 80 per cent over last two years. Cost of production of a pound of tea stood at Taka 6.50 to Taka 7.00 now he informed.

The State Minister for Commerce told a questioner that per acre yield of tea in Bangladesh was 812 pounds compared to that of 1200 pounds in India.

NON-TEA CROPS

He said that possibility of developing tea plantation in Dinajpur-Chittagong, Hill Tracts and Madhupur forest area would be examined.

Efforts would continue to grow non-tea crops such as rubber, coffee, black pepper, turmeric, ginger, lemon, pine-apple, chironella grass, bamboo, malikana etc. in the tea estates, he said. He said that trial production of coffee in some of the tea gardens of the country was going on.

James Finlay a British company had exported 30 tons of coffee grown in its tea gardens in Bangladesh, he said.

Mr Siddiky said that Bangladesh being the producer of three per cent on world's tea shared four per cent of world tea export trade.

He said five countries, namely, Pakistan, Egypt, UK, USSR and Poland accounted for 54 per cent of Bangladesh's tea export.

He stressed that efforts should continue to capture larger share of these markets side by side with steps to diversify export market, including sending sales mission to Middle East, EEC, Europe, USA, Australia, Canada for expanding Bangladesh tea export.

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Siddiky said that there was great potential for increased export of Bangladesh tea to Pakistan. He said, "if we export all of our exportable quantity of tea, we can meet only 50 per cent of the total demand for tea in Pakistan".

On the export of tea under barter trade agreements, Mr. Siddiky said that only 17 per cent of the Bangladesh tea export went to USSR and Poland under barter trade agreements.

He hoped that progress of development of tea industry would be speeded up if the various facilities provided in the tea policy for 1980-81.

Mr Matiur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Kazi Azhar Ali, Chairman, Bangladesh Tea Board, among others, were present at the Press conference.