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A pioneer of eco-friendly rice farming

By Reaz Ahmad, back from the Philippines

Sesinado Masajo has proved the worth of preserving biological balance in the fields and that use of insecticides does more harm than goods in the long run.

The farmer from San Felix, Laguna, who has pioneered non-pesticide farming since the 1980s, was a lone ranger when he initiated his venture in 1982 on his 28-hectare farmland, over 60 kilometres away from Manila, the country's capital.

Nearly two decades down the line, Masajo has now become a role-model for several hundred farmers in the neighbourhood. Recognition came from the IIRI as well. The world body of rice research has followed his cue in field experiments in several other Asian countries.

IIRI, in league with various national agricultural research systems (NARS), has undertaken experiments on selected farming locations in Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, China and the Philippines over the last few years. Experiments have endorsed Masajo's method of pest management and revealed that there is no significant yield difference between pesticide-aided and non-pesticide

farming. If insecticides are not applied, Masajo says, the number of parasites and predators increases rapidly and reaches a level that keep pest populations low.

An agriculture graduate from University of Philippines, Los Banos, Masajo says that if insecticide is used, it kills beneficial parasite and predators rather than harmful insects, disturbs natural balance and leads to resurgence of certain pests like brown planthopper.

The Daily Star correspondent along with 25 other Asian journalists were on a visit to Masajo's farmland late last month as part of an IIRI-arranged rice orientation workshop.

Long before 1982, Masajo used to be a production manager in a commercial rice farm in southern province of Mindanao where a team of technicians was responsible for pest control. There he witnessed that after four to five times of routine applications of pesticides every season, pest infestation remained a serious headache.

Masajo noticed that whereas neighbouring paddy fields, be-

longing to small farmers, with no insecticides were full of spiders, and other predators and parasites, in his company's farm, pests had a free reign. His observation led to a hypothesis that insecticides are not necessary for rice farming. However, he did not get the opportunity to put his theory to test on the

farm. Masajo's rice-farming neighbours have gradually adopted his system of helping beneficial insects to grow and stopped pesticide use ever since. San Felix apart, non-pesticide farming is a popular practice in many other parts of the Philippines.



A proud Masajo's 'no-pesticide' rice ranch.

— Star photo: Reaz Ahmad

Owners of a 12-hectare ranch, Jose G. Burgos Junior and Edita T. Burgos have planted insect-repellent trees like pepper and marigold to drive rice pests away. Besides, the San Miguel farmland has plenty of 'Roselle' a plant that attract pests, thereby giving relief to rice fields from pest attacks.

According to IIRI's Insect Ecologist Kenneth George Schonehy Insecticides affect farmers' health, pose harm to beneficial insects and promote secondary pest problems.

The concept of integrated pest management (IPM) puts emphasis on biological control while minimising or eliminating insecticide inputs. Research at IIRI shows that avoiding use of insecticides in the first 40 days is crucial because this is when beneficial insects settle down and multiply to a level which keeps pest population down for the rest of the season.

However, a recent study in Vietnam reveals that 84 per cent of farmers apply insecticide within the first 40 days after sowing to protect plants from leaf folders, doing more harms than good.

No bounty hunting: HC

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a ruling asking the government and the SP of Jessore to show cause within four weeks as to why the SP's recent announcement of a reward of Tk 10 thousand for killing any terrorist would not be declared illegal and ineffective.

The HC orders followed a written complaint by Barrister Omar Sadat that the SP, Abdur Rouf, at an anti-terrorism rally in Jessore on Monday announced a Tk 10 thousand reward for killing a terrorist.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice KM Hasan and Justice Mohammad Abdul Quddus also asked the government to clarify why action should not be taken against the SP, according to a press release issued by Omar Sadat yesterday.

The court also said if any crime is committed in view of the SP's statement within the next four weeks, it would take stern action in this regard. The judges also declared the SP's announcement null and void for the next six weeks, the press release added.

SEC

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oured, the bourses will "square up" the unsettled trade by selling his securities without any further reference to him.

The defaulting member will also be barred from trading from the "defaulting day" to the "settlement day" until payment of the balance amount and the prescribed fine.

If a member fails more than once in any month, the bourses will inform the SEC about the default after closure of the settlement time, determined by the exchanges. The member will also be suspended from trading from the transaction day till the settlement day and clearance from the regulators.

The defaulting member will also be fined Tk 5,000 per day for a defaulted amount up to one lakh, Tk 7,500 for Tk one to two lakh, Tk 10,000 for Tk two to three lakh, Tk 25,000 for Tk three to five lakh and Tk 50,000 for Tk five to ten lakh.

For failing to pay above Tk one crore, Tk one lakh will be fined along with the fractional slabs.

The bourses have been asked to adopt the new system by May 10.

The move came after press reports that certain quarters were taking advantage of the loopholes in the settlement rules and manipulating the stock market.

The sources said that the SEC was thinking of imposing tighter regulations in near future. The SEC has also asked the DSE to know about the trading of 15 brokers in April, the sources said.

The SEC amended these rules at a marathon meeting from 11:00 am to 5:30 pm and ordered both the bourses to adopt these.

Sources said that the meeting also discussed formation of an independent committee to probe the recent abnormal depression in the market. Talking to this correspondent, SEC Chairman MA Syed said the exchanges are self-regulatory organisations (SROs) and should have the "first line of defence" and bring necessary changes whenever required.

"Since those failed to bring about the necessary changes, the SEC brought the changes to prevent further manipulation," Syed said.

When pointed out that the DSE wanted to revert to the earlier "trade for trade" settlement system, he said that it was DSE which demanded the changed system. "It can not be changed everyday."

"Besides, we will have to see if it is necessary and the best solution. The volume of transaction will go down and we don't think this is the solution," the SEC Chairman said.



Beauty rejuvenated

Flora of the country bathed gleefully in the much anticipated rainfall of the last two days.

— Star Photo: A.K.M. Mohsin

The cost of a covert deal

Violence rocks Adamjee Jute Mills again

By Nazmul Ashraf and Ehsanul Haque

Jatiya Party's hoodwinking of Awami League regarding a covert deal between the two sides during the highly politicised CBA election has resulted in fresh violence at the Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM), according to insiders.

Infamous for unbridled labour unrest, the AJM saw for the first time in its 50-year history of trade unionism an unprecedented peace during recent CBA election.

The break in usual violence came following a negotiation between local AL MP Shamim Osman and JP-backed trade union leader Ruhul Amin Sardar.

As agreed, the MP ensured tight security measures and checked possible terrorism by the pro-AL workers, helping Sardar, the favourite candidate, to win. In return, Sardar was supposed to join the ruling party.

Peace continued to prevail at the AJM area with the AL MP awaiting Sardar to fulfill his commitment. But, less than a month later, the AJM appears to be turbulent again.

The post-election violence, that has so far claimed three lives, was triggered by what the AL-backed labour leaders said was Sardar's betrayal of the ruling party.

However, the JP-supported

new CBA leaders alleged that the fresh trouble took place after the ruling party-supported workers obstructed their move against a section of workers, reportedly backed by past CBA chief Rehanuddin Rehan of AL, who were taking pay without work.

Sardar, the newly elected CBA president, took up the wage malpractice issue as a tool to weaken his long-time rival Rehan, who felt aggrieved by his party MP's failed collusive effort.

CBA general secretary, Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star that some 400 to 500 workers were involved in malpractice over the last nine years (Rehan's regime).

The AJM administration, in collaboration with the new CBA, started preventing the malpractice and this resulted in fresh trouble. "This could help the authorities save 5.44 lakh a week," said Delwar, quoting the officials.

An official confirmed the malpractice and the losses caused by it. But he could not give any specific information.

The previous CBA general secretary, however, denied the existence of any malpractice during their time but admitted that only 30 workers in the past CBA regime were paid without

work.

The recent AL-JP armed clashes were actually the result of Sardar's attempt to take over absolute control of the AJM and Rehan's move to retain his long-held dominance.

There are allegations that former CBA chief Rehan maintained control over eight AJM fisheries from which he extracted illegal income and different officers' quarters where he unlawfully housed relatives and supporters. He also took over different areas in and around the mills that housed workers to exercise dominance in the neighbourhood. Tolls were collected and criminal activities took place in the areas under Rehan.

It is further alleged that he procured shares from the purchase of jute and illegally acquired tenders for buying spare parts for machines. Rehan's people were also blamed for illegally extracting timber from the mill areas.

All these undue facilities started going out of Rehan's reach and were being gradually grabbed by the new CBA.

Local JP leader, Safar Ali Bhuiyan, a rival of Rehan, is reportedly taking the advantage of the Rehan-Sardar dispute. Bhuiyan is trying to regain his dominance over the New Colony and Kadamtoli areas.

Local BNP leader Golakata

Quasem, whose group was earlier evicted from Kadamtoli, has also joined the Sardar group.

Caught while playing clever, MP Shamim Osman then brokered a peace deal between the Sardar-Rehan groups. But the rival groups locked in gunfight only two weeks after they signed the deal. The peace measures helped Rehan's supporters return to the AJM campus from where they ousted their rivals during the recent clashes.

Their last round of battle taking place three days ago, both the groups were learnt preparing to combat each other again. Driven by the port authorities of arrival of LC goods on the Indian border. He or his representative must carry authorised identity card to contact his counterpart across the border.

In the past, the importers and their representatives would ignore these formalities to speed up the process. Importers and exporters at Sonar Masjid termed the new rules "embarrassing" and had issued an ultimatum to the authorities to withdraw those by May 4.

When contacted, the Commissioner said that the restrictions over illegal border crossing had been imposed after discussions with BDR and other authorities concerned.

Corruption at Biman's overseas missions

Ministry makes no move to recover Tk 72.58 crore, says audit

By Gobinda Bar

The country suffered a loss of more than Tk 72.58 crore due to corruption, irregularities and violation of rules at 28 overseas stations of Bangladesh Biman between 1972 to June 1996.

A special audit conducted by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) unearthed the huge irregularities by examining the accounts, transactions and activities at the 28 stations.

Findings of the audits were sent to the station authorities concerned. Biman's head office and the Civil Aviation Ministry but no action was taken to recover the money involved.

The report only includes the audit objections which remained unresolved even after

correspondence and discussions with the authorities concerned. As many as 851 audit objections remained unresolved during the period.

At the Calcutta station, a total of 49 audit objections involving Tk 39.14 lakh remained unresolved from April 1972 to June 1996.

Thirty-eight audit objections involving Tk 1.12 crore at Kathmandu between January 1974 and November 1995, 37 involving Tk 23.46 lakh at Abu Dhabi between September 1976 and June 1995 and 103 objections involving Tk 3.29 crore at Jeddah station between October 1978 and September 1996 remained unresolved.

The amounts remaining unresolved with other stations of

Biman are: Dubai - Tk 76.24 lakh, Tripoli - Tk 1.02 crore, London - Tk 28.73 crore, Kuala Lumpur - Tk 65.94 lakh, Singapore - Tk 1.56 crore, Bangkok - Tk 94.73 lakh, Yangon - Tk 12.61 lakh, Paris - Tk 49.14 lakh, Karachi - Tk 74.21 lakh, Frankfurt - Tk 3.31 crore, Amsterdam - Tk 1.89 crore, New Delhi - Tk 7.02 lakh, Riyadh - Tk 3.09 crore, New York - Tk 20.51 crore and Tokyo - Tk 10.95 crore.

The audit report revealed that Tk 12.81 crore collected from sale of Biman's tickets remained outstanding with a former General Sales Agent, Messers Bengal Trading Co Ltd, at Tokyo. The amount seems to have been embezzled as it has remained outstanding since long," the report said.

At the Kathmandu station, Biman suffered Tk 8.26 lakh loss as its agents were given 'commission' at a higher rate, violating the International Air Transport Association's rate of five per cent of the airway bill. The money involved was recoverable from the persons concerned," an audit report said. Kathmandu station's accounts between January 1994 and November 1995 were audited.

Tk 20,534 was paid as taxes for personal telephone calls by the station's officers and employees during January 1994-November 1995, in violation of rules. The report said.

At the Kuala Lumpur station, two officials were paid Tk 92,000 as overseas allowance in

an irregular way during May 1985-June 1992.

At the London station, Biman passengers were paid Tk 1.84 lakh for their transport cost between July 1987 and June 1991 because more tickets were sold than the number of seats.

Tk 72,000 remained outstanding with Bangladesh mission at Islamabad for long, an audit of accounts of Biman's Karachi station from July 1991 to June 1993 revealed.

Three officials of Karachi station were paid overseas allowance along with daily allowance on their joining, violating rules. Officials are not entitled to overseas allowance till a certain period after joining, the report said.

গ্যাস ট্রান্সমিশন কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
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এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ০৭-০৫-৯৯ইং তারিখ হইতে ১৫-০৫-৯৯ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত বঙ্গবন্ধু সেতুতে অতি সম্পত্তি স্থাপিত ৩০" ব্যাসের ৯ কিঃমিঃ দীর্ঘ উচ্চচাপ সম্পন্ন গ্যাস সঞ্চালন পাইপলাইনের হাইড্রোটেক্টিক টেস্ট কার্যক্রম চলিবে। উক্ত টেস্ট চলাকালীন সময়ে বঙ্গবন্ধু সেতু এবং সেতুর পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম সড়কসমূহকে 'বঙ্গবন্ধু সেতু পূর্ব' রেল স্টেশন হইতে 'বঙ্গবন্ধু সেতু পশ্চিম' রেল স্টেশন পর্যন্ত সীমাবদ্ধ করা হইবে। যানবাহন এবং সেতুর নীচে দিয়া যমুনা নদীতে চলাচলকারী জনসাধারণ ও যানবাহন এবং সেতুর নীচে দিয়া যমুনা নদীতে চলাচলকারী জনসাধারণকে সতর্কভাবে সীমাবদ্ধ করা হইবে।

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Filthy, fatal explosives

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network of WASA's storm sewerage (mainly for rainwater) consists of 185 kilometres of pipelines, six kilometres of box culverts and 60 kilometres of open channels (natural canal routes). Hundreds of kilometres of surface drains in the city are maintained by the Dhaka City Corporation.

"These illegal connections are not only causing serious obstruction in the storm sewerage, but also forming lethal gas in the system. We can't even find people to work for the yearly cleanup drive which costs us as much as Tk three crore," said a WASA official on condition that he not be named. Officials of the Storm Sewerage Section warned that formation of gas could also cause massive explosions anywhere, anytime. They said about two years ago an explosion in the storm sewerage at Green Road and Panthapath intersection tipped over a big chunk of the road and caused

broken glasses from the nearby buildings to fly. Fortunately, there was no human casualty since the incident happened early in the morning.

Hundreds of homeowners near lakes or low-lying areas in the city have not even bothered to build their septic tanks at all. Instead, they have directed their sewerage lines into lakes or water bodies. Most recently, the government had to spend some Tk three crore to relocate more than a hundred sewerage lines from the Dhanmondi lake during its development work.

However, Gulshan, Banani and Uttara lakes and numerous low-lying areas of the city still remain dumping grounds. There are an estimated 400 slums in the WASA area and 250 of them have a population between 15,000 and 20,000 each. WASA sources recently said that some NGOs had set up latrines in some slums but thousands of other slum dwellers have only makeshift open pit latrines or surface

drains to use. The total slum population in the city stands at around two million.

WASA officials estimated that nine million inhabitants of the city produce some seven lakh cubic metre of sewage every day. Moreover, 80 per cent of total water consumption is disposed off with the sewerage system.

The Pagla Sewage Treatment Plant which can treat 1.20 lakh cubic metre of wastes per day received only 36,000 cubic metre on Sunday due to the damages and leaks in the pipelines. The WASA chief engineer, explaining the existing system, said the Pagla Sewage Treatment Plant receives wastes through two sources. One is directly through Goran, Basabo line and the other through Narinda Pump House. Both the lines are in a very bad condition and need constant repairs to keep them working. He said another reason why the flow of sewage was low these days was due to lack of water with the

waste.

He, however, said there was some hope for the city dwellers: A Japanese government-aided Tk 5.7 crore study on city sewerage system has just been completed. The study envisages projects costing nearly Tk 2,000 crore to develop the system in the southern and north-eastern parts of the city by the year 2020.

"But how shall we design a system when people have a tendency to throw anything from pillows, mattresses and coconut shell to polythene bags into the drains?" wondered the chief engineer.

Moreover, to keep the existing sewerage system in operation and to avoid a disaster, Tk 140 crore (28.5 million US dollar) has been made available through a World Bank loan, a Japanese grant and a government aid. On an urgent basis, we are now working to do rehabilitation work on the system," he said.

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ষ্ট্যা

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