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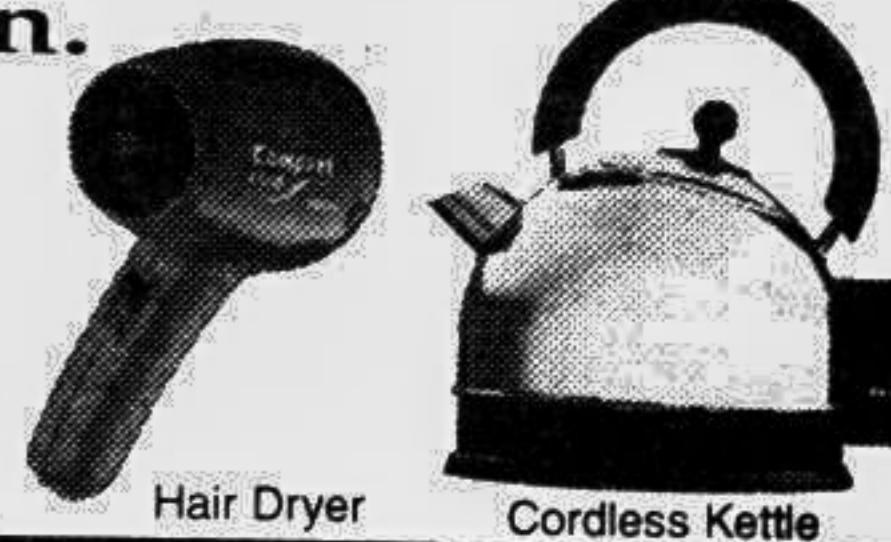
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A pioneer of eco-friendly rice farming

By Reaz Ahmad, back from the Philippines

Sesinido 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 IRI as well. The world body of rice research has followed his cue in field experiments in several other Asian countries.

IRRI, 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 IRI-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, no-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

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 5.40 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 domination.

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, Safer 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 Sadar group.

Catch 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 out during the CBA election, armed terrorists including convicts in various cases have reportedly returned to the AJM campus.

Local police admitted that the terrorists had returned to the AJM with the blessings from all the three major parties and that action against them was not possible without cooperation from these parties, especially the ruling one.

Former CBA secretary, Ismail Hossain blamed the JP-backed labour leaders for dodging the AL leaders to win the polls. "They promised to join our party in return to getting cooperation in the polls but now they are betraying."

Trading halts at Rajshahi land port

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, May 6: Import and export through the Sona Masjid Land Port is stopped since yesterday due to an indefinite strike by the importers and exporters.

The strike began in demand for withdrawal of "some restrictions" imposed by the Customs, Excise and VAT Commissioner, Rajshahi, on May 1 over border crossing by importers and their representatives.

The authorities have introduced new rules for importers and exporters.

According to the new rules, an importer or his representative must inform 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 cross the border.

Importers and exporters at Sona 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.

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 netting 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.

No bounty hunting: HC

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a rule nisi 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 order 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

From Page 1

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 Tk two lakh, Tk 10,000 for Tk two lakh to Tk 10 lakh, Tk 25,000 for Tk 10 lakh to Tk 50 lakh and Tk 50,000 for Tk 50 lakh to Tk one crore.

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 and manipulating the stock market.

The stock markets have been witnessing severe depression and are hitting new lows.

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.

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Beauty rejuvenated

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

— Star Photo: A.K.M. Mohsin

Officer-client nexus costs BASIC crores

By Gobinda Bar

The Bank of Small Industries and Commerce (Bangladesh) Ltd incurred a loss of more than Tk 10.98 crore during 1992-1997 due to massive irregularities by a section of its officials and employees in collusion with clients.

Manager of BASIC's Dilkusha Branch in Dhaka Saeedur Rahman Chowdhury regularly permitted some borrowers to open LCs in violation of rules which resulted in a bad debt of Tk 4.09 crore.

A large number of LCs were issued to various Tanti Satiaries from 1993 for importing yarn under the guarantee of an importer, Mrinal Kanti Paul. The guarantor violated rules in case of 17 LCs.

The report held some senior officials at the bank's head office and the manager of Dilkusha Branch responsible for granting overdraft loans.

Analysing the situation, it is found that Dilkusha branch manager Saeedur Rahman Chowdhury was involved in business with the borrowers. He violated rules and indulged in malpractices to gratify his self-interest," it said.

The bank suffered loss of Tk 43.93 lakh as LCs were issued violating rules, on the basis of fake documents.

BASIC has Tk 32.91 lakh outstanding loan with a joint venture private company, Technolite Tex Chemical Industries Ltd, Pabna. The loan was granted in an irregular way.

BASIC suffered a loss of Tk 31.12 lakh as Dilkusha branch manager issued two Credit Certificates with 20 and 25 percent margin violating rules.

Besides, Tk 27.29 lakh remained outstanding with Messrs Ahmed Sabur as the loan was given without assessing creditworthiness of the loan seeker. GM of the bank Saeedul Haq and branch manager Mohammad Shamim were responsible for the irregularities, the report said.

Besides these, the audit report also mentioned a number of cases of irregularities by bank officials, causing a huge loss to the bank.

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