

Artificial reproduction centre may close down

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Sept 18: Deep frozen Rajshahi Semen Production and Preservation Centre (RDFSPPC) is on the verge of closure due to manifold problems.

Shortage of experts, necessary manpower and funds, loadshedding and lack of vehicles are the main reason contributing to the prevailing deadlock situation.

The centre was established in 1998 in Rajshahi Dairy and Cattle Development Farm (RDCDF) under expanded Artificial Reproduction Project. This is the second of its kind in the country. The first one was established at Savar in Dhaka.

RDFSPPC started functioning as a development project with a total budget of about Taka 4.5 crore aiming at development of animal resources by collecting and distributing semen of oxen of improved species thereby expanding artificial reproduction of cows.

The centre was placed under Rajshahi District Artificial Reproduction Centre (RDARC) for looking after.

RDARC Assistant Director Azizul Islam said that there was a big and modern centre for production, processing and preservation of semen of oxen at Savar in Dhaka. But it has been proved very difficult to supply the preserved semen everywhere in the country. RDFSPPC was established to remove the problem. It was then supposed that semen would be supplied to the districts of Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal from RDFSPPC. But none of the goals could be achieved so far for some serious problems.

The development project, under which RDFSPPC was established, completed its term in last June. All the six employees of the centre have accordingly been released. There were on laboratory technician, one nitrogen plant operator, two bullet attendants, one night guard and a driver working in the centre. After release of these employees, RDFSPPC has virtually become devoid of manpower. RDARC Assistant Director Azizul Islam, who is looking after RDFSPPC in addition to his original charge, informed that after completion of the project, a process of including the RDFSPPC in revenue sector was going on. He, however, could not say how much time it would take.

There are eight certified oxen and 120 experimental oxen of Frigian and Shalwal species in the centre.

After collection, semen are processed and preserved in liquid nitro-

gen plant at a temperature of around minus 175 degree Celsius. But for frequent loadshedding and voltage fluctuation, the optimum temperature cannot often be maintained. "This seriously hampers preservation of semen," Azizul Islam said adding that the semen lost quality and could not be preserved for many days.

RDFSPPC has no electric generator of its own. Rajshahi Dairy and Cattle Development Farm has a small generator, but it does not work well enough to be used for semen preservation.

To run the centre the Ministry of Animal Resources sent one Assistant Director (Animal Production) Hasan Imam for training to Sweden. After a three months long training he joined the centre in the early stage. But only after one month he was transferred from the centre. Since then the centre has no expert for supervising its functions.

Now semen are being collected but can neither be classified nor be preserved qualitatively. These semen are not bringing expected result in the field level, recent study says. As a result, the principal aim of the project is being foiled.

RDFSPPC has so far been able to supply semen to 28 upazilas of Rajshahi, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Natore districts. It has remained yet a dream to reach the semen to other districts of Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions. The main reason behind it is that neither the upazila animal resources offices nor the RDFSPPC has specialised vehicle and pot for carrying semen.

At present, sale of semen has been stopped. RDFSPPC can sell 8,000 doses of semen every month. One dose of semen measuring 25 millilitre sells at Taka 30 for stoppage of sale of semen, the government is being deprived of a yearly revenue income of about Taka 29 lakh.

"We are some how collecting semen but are facing much troubles in processing and preserving these", said Azizul Islam.

Though they were officially released, RDFSPPC employees are still giving unofficial service now and then with an expectation that RDFSPPC will soon be included in the revenue budget and the normal functioning of the centre will begin in full swing and they will be absorbed in the service.

They are, however, living very miserable lives losing their employment.

A station for anti-socials

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA, Sept 18: Netrakona Railway Station is in deplorable condition for a long time.

Lack of latrine, sitting problems, lack of security and vagabonds' disturbance have made the station a hell for the passengers.

In first class, second class and third class waiting rooms meant for males and females have no arrangement for sitting.

First class waiting room remains always under lock and key and railway employees use it as bedroom.

In second class waiting room meant for females, there is no arrangement for sitting. It is now being used by fish and egg traders.

Second class waiting room for male is also the same. It has become a safe haven for gambler, hemp-smoker and other anti-socials.

Just after sunset, anti-socials enter into this waiting room. They move freely in the platform and make obscene remarks to woman passengers and take money from the passengers forcibly.

After sunset, the floating prostitutes move freely in the station area and give obscene hints to the male passengers.

Due to lack of latrines, the waiting passengers mainly women are in trouble.

Roof of platform is full of cracks



Railway passengers are being deprived of basic amenities in Netrakona Station where anti-socials rule most of the time.

causing rains waters flood the platforms.

After 10 pm the platform of the station becomes a garage of rickshaw, van and trolley.

When contacted with the sta-

tion master, he told that he has no capacity to solve these problems.

But reliable sources said, the Station Master takes money from fish, egg traders and van owners.

Local people have urged the concerned authorities to take necessary steps and action against the corrupted Station Master.

—Star photo

Murders stalk people

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 18: Police have made little or no headway in three sensational murder cases here, much to the chagrin of local residents. The gruesome murders of three union parishad chairmen—Belal Hossain, Shajahan Ali and Moazzem Hossain—are still haunting them.

Belal Hossain, 42, chairman of Saidabad union parishad under Sadar upazila, was murdered on July 2. Assassination, numbering about 12, attacked Belal, who was also local leader of ruling Awami League, with sharp weapons. Belal Hossain was on his way to Sirajganj town on a motorcycle when he came under the attack. Home Minister Mohammad Nasim visited Saidabad union on July 4 and ordered police to arrest people involved in the killing.

On September 9 police arrested Abdul Rahman, 33, son of Gonjer Ali of Chaquill village under Sadar upazila in connection with Belal murder. Police, however, said a section of influential people are active to get the arrested freed. Abdul Rahman is believed to be a close associate of Khademul Islam Mondol, the newly elected chairman of Saidabad union parishad.

Shajahan Ali, chairman of Jawil union parishad under Kamarkanda was murdered on October 19, 1998 in broad daylight on SS Road in Sirajganj town by a group of armed men. The case was transferred to CID on November 23, 1999 due to slow progress of it. However, after a long time police on September 9 arrested Abdul Majid, member of Sialkole union parishad, in connection with Shajahan Ali murder.

Moazzem Hossain, immediate successor of Shajahan Ali, was murdered in broad day at Palkosha Bazar in December 1999. Police have failed to arrest the criminals. In the meantime, Tota Munshi, 50, a close associate of late chairman Moazzem Hossain, was murdered on June 23, 2000 in Railway Over Bridge area near Bangbandhu Jamuna Bridge.

Local people said if the killers and offenders go unpunished the law and order situation will definitely deteriorate further.

Candidates far outnumber posts

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Sept 18: At least 3,546 candidates have applied for only 14 vacant posts of assistant teachers of different primary schools in six upazilas here.

The district primary education office sources said that out of the total candidates, about 70 per cent are female.

An advertisement, inviting applications for appointment to those posts, was published in the national dailies last month.

The office, so far, received 4,213 applications from intending candidates of the district.

Of them, 3,546 candidates including 2,480 female have been selected for the written test, to be held on September 22 at five centres.

The sources said that 394 candidates including 267 female have applied for posts in Gurudaspur upazila while 924 candidates including 651 female

candidates have applied for the posts in Natore sadar upazila. 390 candidates including 267 female in Baraigram, 229 candidates including 162 female candidates in Bangatpara upazila, 446 candidates including 317 female in Lalpur upazila and 1,163 candidates including 816 female candidates have applied for posts in Shingra upazila.

Female candidates having minimum SSC level educational qualification and male candidates having HSC level qualification including PTI certificate or having graduation degree were invited for the posts. But many candidates, having a Master degree with first class all round, applied for the posts of primary teachers.

The examination for appointing the primary teachers is expected to be held on September 22.

Pests invade Aman

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Sept 18: Transplanted Aman paddy farming in the district is facing setback due to pest attack and substandard fertilisers.

Farmers and agriculture officials said if the problems are solved immediately the target of production may not be achieved in the current season.

Farmers said they started Aman farming this season following last year's good harvest. But pests have dampened their high hope.

This correspondent recently visited Parbatpur, Kancharkole and Dhaurah villages under Shalakupur upazila and witnessed a huge quantity of pest affected paddy plants.

Kari Borjaha, 45, a farmer of village Kancharkole, said they had satisfactory production of BR-11 and Lal Sarna varieties last year, but this year both the varieties are affected by pests.

Khalil Selkh, 46, a farmer of village Dhaurah, said had been cheated by some dishonest fertiliser sellers as a huge quantity of adulterated fertilisers were on sale in the market during cultivation.

Agriculture Extension Department had fixed a target to bring a total of 74,250 hectares of land under the cultivation in the district with a production target of 167,500 metric tons of rice this season. However, 85,438 hectares of land have been brought under the cultivation, surpassing the target.

According to AED office sources, 18,250 hectares of land were brought under high yielding variety (HYV) and 20 hectares under local variety in Sadar upazila, 15,500 hectares under HYV and 80 hectares under local variety in Kaliganj, 4,000 hectares under HYV in Kotchandpur, 15,750 hectares under HYV in Moheshpur, 12,000 hectares under HYV and 50 hectares under local variety in Shalakupur and 8,500 hectares under HYV and 50 hectares under local variety in Harinakundu.

Upazila-wise break-up of production target of rice was fixed at 41,274 mt in Sadar, 35,148.4 mt in Kaliganj, 9,040 mt in Kotchandpur, 35,595 mt in Moheshpur, 27,194 mt in Shalakupur and 19,284 mt in Harinakundu.

No technical education facilities in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Sept 18: Not a single institution for technical education or vocational training has so far been established in the city of Rajshahi, the divisional headquarters in last two decades.

Due to the lack of facilities of technical education and vocational training, thousands of students, dropped out in secondary and higher secondary school levels cannot proceed further for higher education. They do not get any employment both in government and private sectors and cannot even generate self-employment for lack of technical education or vocational training.

Mohammad Qamaruzzaman of Sagarpara in the city failed two times in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination. He is not sure whether he will pass the examination this year. "Had I the opportunity to study on any technical subject for one or two years, I would have studied it to make me fit for a job", he said.

Abdul Hamid of Budhpura in the city passed the SSC examination in 1999 in third division and now studying in a newly established private college. He actually does not want to continue the study. "What shall I do after passing HSC with third division, I shall not be able to get admission into graduation course, you know. Then I have to do something for livelihood. But what shall I do when I have no technical and vocational training," he asked.

Many others opined in the same way that there should be facilities of technical education and vocational training in Rajshahi.

There are a Polytechnic Institute and a Health (Paramedical) Institute run by the government in Rajshahi. Rajshahi District Board runs a survey institute which is about 100 years old.

In the office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Rajshahi Education Board (REB), there were six colleges, and 25 secondary level high schools in the 80s in the city. This year the numbers of college and high school stood at 21 and 43 respectively. But all these educational institutions are of general nature and have been established by private entrepreneurs. Neither the government nor the private entrepreneurs have established even a single institution for technical education and vocational training during the period.

Eminent educationist and columnist Dr Ebne Golam Samad, a retired professor in Botany of Rajshahi University opined that in addition to higher education, technical and vocational education should be extended. "Especially for Rajshahi, an industrially underdeveloped and agriculture-dominant area, technical and vocational training and education should be planned accordingly," he said.

News snaps



President of Sandwip Association, Dhaka and central literary and social welfare secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Dr Jamal Uddin Chowdhury recently distributed relief materials among the tidal surge affected people of Sandwip.

Relief distributed

Dr Jamal Uddin Chowdhury, president of Sandwip Association, Dhaka and central literary and social welfare secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) recently distributed relief materials among the affected people of tidal surge battered offshore island of Sandwip recently, says a press release.

The relief materials included 2.5 tons of rice, 400 kgs of pulse and an amount of Taka 10,000. He also treated 650 affected persons with the members of a medical team. He enquired about the welfare of the victims. During his visit Master Shahjahan, president of Sandwip upazila Awami League and chairman of Bararia union, the chairmen of Maitdanga, Kalapania and Santoshpur unions respectively Hafizur Rahman, Abu Sufian and Ful Mia, organising and office secretary of Sandwip Association, Dhaka Mahmudul Hasan Selim and VP of Sandwip A B College Jakaria Titu accompanied him.

Arsenic filters distributed

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Sept 18: Amid growing arsenic contamination in tubewell waters some 25 arsenic freeing filters were distributed in the town here on Thursday, reports UNB.

Chairman of Rajshahi Education Board Prof Khalilur Rahman distributed his newly invented filters among the poor and distressed families of the municipalities areas. Prof Khalilur prepared the low cost device with four mud pitchers and a steel stand shelf. The new invention has created hope among the people of the town.

Boat with cattle sinks

SUNAMGANJ, Sept 18: An engine boat carrying 23 cattle sank in Dhankonia Haor last week, reports UNB.

All the five boaters were rescued by the fishermen but the cattle tied with the boat died. Informed sources said traders bought the cattle from Dharmapasha and were taking to Sunamganj for sale. But the boat caught in the storm sank in the midstream of the Haor.

Octogenarian chargesheeted

KURIGRAM, Sept 18: Police have chargesheeted an octogenarian woman for her alleged attempt to murder and illegal holding of a gathering at Chilmari upazila, reports UNB.

The accused Bachani Bewa, 85, appeared before the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) court here supporting on the shoulder of two other women on Thursday. Stunned with the scene Additional District Magistrate (ADM) directed the concerned authorities to inform the matter to Home Ministry and IGP to take departmental action against investigation officer SI Mohsin for submitting chargesheet against such an old woman. One Shahjahan filed a case against 15 including the woman for illegal public gathering and attempt to murder him on February 24, this year. SI Mohsin after investigation charge sheeted against the accused.

Scarcity of water

SUNAMGANJ, Sept 18: Some 560 tubewells requiring repair have been lying idle for long, causing scarcity of drinking water in those areas, reports UNB.

Public health officials said, 560 tubewells out of 14,559 in 83 unions of the district, remained idle. The idle tubewells are in ten remote upazilas where many people use to draw drinking water from ponds and canals. The population of the district now stands at about 22 lakh. Officials said another 14,000 tubewells should be sunk in remote villages to meet the demand of safe drinking water.

Body recovered

BOGRA, Sept 18: Dhunal police recovered a body of teenager girl of village Sattokri in Dhunal upazila, reports BSS.

Family sources said some identified youths failing their ill motive kidnapped and killed her after raping. A case has been registered with Dhunal Police Station.

Load-shedding in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Sept 18: Due to prolonged load-shedding the people of Bandarban district could not witness the Olympic Games, report BSS.

People have been experiencing load-shedding for about 8 to 10 hours everyday for quite a long time. When contacted the Power Development Board sources said load-shedding its caused by repair work being done in Dohajari sub-station.

Donation

BANDARBAN, Sept 18: Chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council Mong Kyia Salla has distributed Taka 18,000 among 9 volunteer organisations by cheque at his office room recently, reports BSS.

The cheque was donated by the Social Service Department. Official sources said the distribution programme was occurred first time by the new appointed Chairman. Later he also visited various development projects.

1,858 projects implemented

KISHOREGANJ, Sept 18: Some 1,858 projects were implemented in 13 upazilas and three municipalities here in the last fiscal, spending 2,935 mts of grain, reports UNB.

Of the grains, some 1,200 mts of wheat or rice were utilised for the implementation of 778 rural infrastructure maintenance projects while the rest 1,735 mts for 1,080 other projects. Upazila-wise break-up of the projects: Aushiragram-113, Bajitpur-123, Bhairab-121, Hossainpur-97, Itna-160, Sadar-284, Kullarchar-189, Nikli-41, Pakundia-183, Taria-109, Mithamoni-119, Kotadi-98 and Karimganj-185. Besides, 19 projects were implemented in Kishoreganj Municipality while 14 in Bhoirab Municipality and three in Bajitpur Municipality. The project works included repairing of rural roads, earth filling on playgrounds of educational institutions.



The sixth founding anniversary of Ajker Telegram, a local daily of Tangail was observed recently at Tangail Municipality Auditorium befittingly. Photo shows an artiste rendering songs on the occasion.

Now Shital Pati from banana leaves!

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Sept 18: Shital Pati, a popular mat mainly produced in Sylhet from 'nolka' or rattans, is now being made of banana leaves.

Observing the nearly extinction of Sylheti Shital Pati, the experts of Chhatrangachha Dustha-O-Bhumihin Samajik Sangstha (CDBSS), a Natore based Non-Governmental Organisation NGO, after extensive research, have innovated a new method of making mats from banana leaves. It is now gaining popularity all over the country.

The CDBSS president Md Mahub Hossain said, the mats which are being made of banana leaves are similar in both quality and comfort to those which are produced from rattans.

He also said the new formula has brought dynamism in the country's cottage industries and poor people would largely be benefited from it.

As per the new formula, long tissues of banana leaves are separated from sticks and then

boiled in water. Two chemical substances are also mixed with the water for longevity and brightness of the mat. Finally the leaves are dried up in sun light.

CDBSS in collaboration with Pabna, Natore and Shirajganj Integrated Rural Development Programme (PANAS) and BADC, launched a training programme in June this year and has so far imparted training to 80 women on the new formula of making Shital Pati.

General secretary of CDBSS Osman Ali told The Daily Star that all the 3,400 women members of the organisation would be imparted training in phases on the formula in a bid to make the new mats available across the country.

Osman also said that a 6 by 8 square feet size mat made of banana leaves is now selling between Taka 300 and Taka 400 against the production cost of not over Taka 150 each while the Sylheti Shital Pati is selling between Taka 1200 and Taka

1,500.

The new method of making mats from banana leaves has already changed the life of many poor people, especially of the womanfolk.

It was a dream for poor Rubina and Mithila to appear in SSC examination. But the days are not far away when their dream will come true.

They have collected the money they need to sit for the examination by making Shital Pati from banana leaves.

"We are preparing to appear in the SSC examination next year... we hope our dream will be materialised, said a beaming Rubina.

Rubina and Mithila are no exceptions. Akhlila Bewa, Buluware, Anjuman Ara, Anwara and Jolly are also among the girls who are making mats with the newly innovated method and determined to change their lots.



Woman workers making 'Shital Pati', a traditional mat, with processed tissues of banana leaves at a training centre of a non-governmental organisation at Bonpara in Natore district.

—Star photo