

Frustration for low literacy in Panchgaon, Rajkhola removed

MOULVIBAZAR, Jan. 22:—The poor people of Panchgaon and Rajkhola villages do no more fumble in as two different educational institutions in the area have at long last brought their aims to fruition, reports BSS.

Illiterate parents of the two neighbouring villages, who have of late conceived the idea of education in life, feel proud when they see their sons and daughters with books, tools and immaculate smiles every morning on way to these institutions.

Expressing their satisfaction to visiting BSS Correspondant recently, the villagers said their long prevailing frustration for low literacy, especially among girls had now gone with the establishment of Panchgaon High School and Rajkhola Vocational Training Centre.

Girls dominate the enrolment now with over 60 per cent in Panchgaon High School established in 1985 and cent per cent in Rajkhola Vocational Training Centre established in 1989 under Panchgaon Union of Rajnagar thana.

Dr. Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, a leading Economist and development planner of the country, took the lead for setting up these two institutions now located at two miles distance from each other. A sense of enthusiasm is sweeping the whole area which has so long been devoid of high school education.

Local elite said, the literacy rate had now shot up to 10 per cent in Panchgaon union of 30,000 population while that in Rajnagar thana was recorded at 9.4 per cent and Moulvibazar district 14 per cent only.

Dr. Ahmad collected a total of Taka 2.80 lakh from various sources both at home and abroad to set up the school to fulfil the long five decades' desire of the local people. Meanwhile, special Facility Department of the Ministry of Education has chosen the school with its over 400 students for development.

Available records said the school had scored appreciable results since its establishment and 71 per cent success was achieved in last year's SSC examination along with a sizeable number of first division for the girl students alone. However, it was a mere dream for them before earlier.

The vocational Training Centre with carpentry, typing, skill development, bamboo and cane work was established under the joint collaboration of Moulvi Mofazzal Hus-

sain Trust and Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, a Dhaka based Development Research Organisation.

As many as 140 students, all came from poor families of nearby homes, are enrolled in the available disciplines. Poultry and pisciculture have also been planned for introducing in the centre. Meanwhile, the Government has recognised carpentry and typing trades of the centre.

Dr. Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, said the Rajkhola Centre titled "Panchgaon Vocational training programme was floated with the philosophy of basic education, skill development and organisation.

"We have devised the plan to train up poor village girls who are either illiterate or dropped out of schools for various reasons," he said. The expertise being developed in the centre will enable these students earn their bread by doing independent or groupwise jobs.

The Trust floated after the name of Dr. Ahmad's father has donated over four acres of land with a pond and a tin-shed house at his village home located near the District Board road on the east. A 15-member advisory committee headed by Chairman of Panchgaon Union Parishad Abdur Rouf and four full-pledged instructors are actively working in this centre.

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, which believes in building villages as the core of development, has already launched two other such centres at Kaliganj under Narsingdi district and Madhavpur under Habiganj district, one another centre will be opened in Ghola next month.

"We are planning to make the Rajkhola centre a full-pledged College with 18 different trades and disciplines," Dr. Q.K. Ahmad said. Lathe and computer will be installed in the next few months after the completion of the construction of the main building.

An officer will be employed to look for jobs for the trained-out while Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad will try to arrange funds from various sources for those who will be interested to run independent or groupwise production units.

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, meanwhile, took up another massive plan for setting up of 25 non-formal primary schools for poor children of seven and half to ten years age groups in eight unions under Rajna-

gar thana.

Parishad's director in charge of Administration and Programme Abdur Rashid Chowdhury is now busy with groundwork for establishing the schools by December this year.

"We will follow BRAC model at the initial stage for 30 students with one teacher in each school to teach basic literacy and numeracy," Mr. Choudhury, a former Chairman of Dhaka Board, told this correspondent.

Dr. Q.K. Ahmad said the establishment cost per student would be between 20 and 30 US dollars a year.

"The schools will start their classes with National Anthem and end with chorus song of Kandari Hoshiar to give a sense of patriotism and courage into their tender minds," he said.

The two institutions are also working as nuclei for motivating younger ones to education and making elder ones to be interested about it as they had realised that education is the only way to progress.

The village chieftains as well as students forget their political identity when they sit together for planning out a way for the development of the area.

"People of all ages irrespective of caste, creed and religion, uphold mutual trust and respect beyond political affiliation in respect of any development in the area," Dr. Q.K. Ahmad said.

The local administration is also extending its cooperation towards the sedulous efforts of the local people there where communication network is also in good order connecting the area with the district town, ten miles away from Panchgaon and Rajkhola.