



A huge quantity of unbaked bricks lie damaged on the premises of a brickfield in Kotbahuria area of Tangail's Mirzapur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Untimely rain damages huge unbaked bricks

Affected brick kiln owners claim total extent of loss could go up to Tk 14 crore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Untimely rain for the last couple of days damaged huge quantities of unbaked bricks that were piled up in the open sky for drying at many brick kilns in different upazilas of the district.

The rain affected brick kiln owners claimed that the total extent of loss could go up to Tk 14 crore.

The non-stop rain since Thursday night damaged raw bricks at different brick kilns in 12 upazilas of the district.

Local brick kiln owners said there are 91 brickfields in operation in Mirzapur

upazila in the current brick burning season.

The rain damaged unbaked bricks in at least 82 brickfields, they claimed.

While visiting a number of brickfields at different villages in Mirzapur this correspondent saw huge quantities of raw bricks piled up inside the kilns were damaged as the rain water entered the kilns premises.

Mohammad Mokhles, owner of NSMB Bricks at Bhaora Noyapara village, told this correspondent that raw bricks, which were kept for burning, worth around Tk 12 lakh were either completely or partially

damaged by the untimely rain.

"I will have to spend an additional Tk 3 lakh to remove the damaged bricks from kiln premises. Moreover, it will take at least 10 days to go for fresh production," Mokhles said, adding that if the weather condition does not improve soon the kiln owners will face severe shortage of raw bricks.

Mohammad Awlad Hossain, owner of Hakim Brick Kiln at Dherua village under Gorai union, said he incurred a loss of about Tk 14 lakh as the rain damaged most of the raw bricks which were piled for drying.

Mirzapur Brick Kiln Owners' Association President Firoz Haider Khan claimed that on an average bricks worth around Tk 10 lakh to Tk 12 lakh were damaged in each of the rain affected brick kilns in the upazila.

Moreover, they will have to bear additional labour cost to remove the damaged bricks, he added.

Meanwhile, thousands of unbaked bricks kept for drying in around 60 brickfields in different areas of Ghatail upazila were also badly damaged due to the untimely rain, Ghatail Brick Kiln Owners' Association General Secretary Faruk Hossain said.

Boy burnt dead while warming by fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A minor boy was burnt to death while warming himself near a fire at Char Khalilpur village in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Md Masud Rana, 7, son of Abdul Masud of the village.

Masud along with some boys were keeping themselves warm by sitting beside a fire near the house around 7:00am, said Md Shahin Chowdhury, chairman of Sagarkandi union parishad.

Suddenly, the fire caught on Masud's clothe. At the time, he sustained serious burn injuries.

Critically injured Masud later died on the way to Pabna General Hospital, said the chairman.

Jewellery shop looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Robbers took away gold ornaments and cash from a jewellery shop at Sathi Road in Madhupur upazila headquarters on Monday night.

Durlov Karmakar, owner of the shop, said as soon as two men in guise of buyers entered the shop around 8:00pm, a crude bomb exploded in front of the shop.

Soon after the blast, some criminals equipped with lethal weapons swooped on the shop and beat him up with iron rod, said Durlov.

Later, the gang took away all the gold ornaments and Tk 65,000 from the shop and fled the scene blasting several bombs.

On information, police visited the spot.

Tarek Kamal, officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station, said they were raiding different areas to arrest the robbers.

Four to die for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A court here on Monday sentenced four men to death for killing a businessman in 2014.

The convicts are Nuru Mia, Ziaul Haque, Lokman Khan and Qadir Hossain of Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar upazila. Of them, Nuru, Lokman and Qadir were tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, Abdul Hannan Bahar, 45, used to run wholesale cosmetics business in Old Dhaka's Chawkbazar area. Retailers used to buy products from him on credit before Eid festivals.

In 2014, Hannan went to convict Lokman's shop in Bangara area of Cumilla's Muradnagar upazila to collect his dues.

Later, Lokman asked Hannan to come to the house of his in-laws in Bramanbaria's Banchhampur upazila. Lokman and his accomplices then threw him into the Titas river and fled the scene.

Two day after the incident, police recovered the body from the river.

The victim's brother later filed a murder case with Banchhampur Model Police Station.

After examining witnesses and evidence, District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Safiul Azam found the four guilty and pronounced the verdict.

Cops for joint meet with judges, PPs

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quoted as saying.

He said that each judicial magistrate deals with 300 cases every day, which is not humanly possible.

Benazir also said that while the police bring the witnesses to court, there is then no one to take over the duties towards those witnesses, such as taking their statements, etc. He requested the home minister to take steps so that the police can hand over responsibilities of witnesses in a lawful manner.

He also said that public prosecutors are legally empowered to preserve all important documents relating to cases like case diaries and seizure lists. "They do not even have offices. Then where do they preserve such important documents?" he was said to have questioned.

The Rab DG added that as there are no storage facilities in courts, the evidence files of such a huge number of pending cases are exposed to damage.

The home secretary was also critical of public prosecutors being authorized to keep case diaries, said a number of officials who attended the meeting.

"How are something so important like case documents kept by a private person? As a result of this an accused is going free by inserting an innocent's name in the case documents," Benazir was quoted as saying.

Discussion on review committees came up after Sylhet SP Md Fariduddin demanded the scrapping of the "District Law and Order Review Committee" during the meeting, saying the committee was unduly influencing and intervening in the investigation of criminal cases.

Shah Alam, deputy inspector general of Criminal Investigation Department, demanded that the

prosecution department be put under the purview of the police to ensure better coordination in criminal cases.

He further urged that higher-ranked officers be appointed officers-in-charge in metropolitan police stations.

Another DIG said that while police submit charge sheets in all cases, the results are not satisfactory as witnesses do not turn up.

"It happens because witnesses do not get the money they are supposed to receive [for expenses incurred to appear in court]," said the DIG.

Referring to a new customs law about to be enacted, the senior home secretary said if the law is enacted, the customs officials will be empowered to shoot a suspect during chase even at the risk of the suspect being killed.

He said he opposed the provision but his observation did not sustain.

Mostafa Kamal Uddin also said that a large number of people have been suffering, subjected to social humiliation and financial strife as they have to appear before courts for years in pending cases.

He said that currently only 82,000 people are in prison -- a number that is meagre in comparison to the number of pending cases, half of which are criminal cases. "Where have the rest of the accused in the cases gone. Are they on the run or have they been released on bail?" he asked.

A superintendent of police demanded that the SPs should be given the authority to chair the district law and order committee in absence of the deputy commissioner.

"Although the SP is the vice-president of the committee, an officer of the district administration who is often found to be junior to the SP, chairs the meeting in

the absence of the DC, who is the president of the committee," said the SP.

On the subject of drug abuse, Cox's Bazar SP ABM Masud Hossain demanded special treatment facilities for drug addicts at all government hospitals in districts to curb the problem.

Chowdhury Abdullah-Al Mamun, additional inspector general of CID, demanded lockup facilities inside CID compounds to improve interrogation and investigation of cases.

He also demanded the immediate approval of a special force with a manpower of 200 to ensure security at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's mausoleum in Tungipara, where a large number of visitors gather every day. The proposal is pending at the home ministry.

Mamun further demanded that additional [Addl] SPs working in districts and different units should be given sports utility vehicles (SUVs) as other officers of different government department at this level are given the vehicles.

An SP now posted at the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) demanded appointment of police officers to the posts of ACC commissioner and director in order to utilise the investigation expertise of police.

Addl DIG of the Police Headquarters, Akhteruzzaman, urged for an increase in upper level posts, saying, "If the number of posts is not increased, 33 percent of the total officers will not be promoted to DIG."

The home minister gave assurances that the terms of reference of the recently formed review committee would be made more consistent and steps taken to provide operational vehicles.

Anti-graft drive to continue: PM

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was spearheading a motivational campaign against corruption as people's participation was a must to check graft. She said the social menace would automatically be reduced if people could be sensitised.

She said harsh drives were simultaneously underway to bring the corrupt to book. Initiatives have also been taken to widen the use of ICT to stamp out corruption in various sectors, she added.

Hasina said the ongoing drives against militancy, terrorism, and narcotics would continue, and the police and other law enforcement agencies achieved significant success in containing militancy.

In her 30-minute speech, she called upon the people to take a fresh vow to establish a non-communal "Sonar Bangladesh" free from hunger, poverty and illiteracy in the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said the government wanted to establish a peaceful society where there would be no hatred and conflict and the people of all religions, castes, and creeds would live in peace.

The PM's address also touched on issues ranging from militancy and drugs to foreign relations, particularly with neighbours, the Rohingya crisis, BNP-Jamaat politics, poverty and social safety net, and campus situation.

"Religious leaders, along with the imams of mosques, have been imparted with training so that none can derail the youth through misinterpretation of the holy Islam," she said.

Hasina said 650 model mosques were being built across the country under government initiative.

She said being a democratic political party, Awami League is always respectful to the constitution.

"We believe in the rule of law and we also believe that the people's mandate is the only way to bring about any change in state power," the PM said, adding that her government always welcomed any peaceful democratic movement.

She, however, said the government would not tolerate destructive activities over illogical demands and warned that recurrence of burning people to death and arson attacks carried out in the past by the BNP-Jamaat would never be allowed again on the soil of Bangladesh.

"We have taken every measures

necessary to make parliament effective and the participation of the lawmakers from both the treasury and opposition benches makes the Jatiya Sangsad vibrant."

The premier said the government activities were centered on the interests of the common people. She said she had full confidence in them.

Hasina said the hard-working common people of the country are always satisfied with little and the Father of the Nation sought throughout his life to establish their rights and bring a smile to their faces.

"Being his daughter, my only aim is to bring a smile to their face . . . keep faith in me and I want to be one of you."

She said one year has passed after the formation of her government following the 11th parliamentary election and the government tried its best to give the people the highest services.

"We don't claim cent percent success in all the sectors. But we can firmly say that there were no lapses in our endeavours. We will step forward learning from the previous mistakes and experiences."

She said her government was entrusted with the task of running the country for consecutive terms since 2009 and they were running the government with a specific target.

"The target is to ensure economic emancipation for the people and establish the basic rights of all alongside improving their living standards."

The premier said some "undesirable incidents" took place in one or two educational institutions last year. "But we want to say firmly that we didn't spare anyone involved in the activities. Administrative and legal actions were taken against those involved in the incidents."

She said some quarters, however, tried to gain benefit by creating anarchy and spreading rumours, but the government had taken prompt remedial measures against the misdeeds.

The PM urged all to always remain alert to such rumours.

She said, "Some valuable lives were lost in the disease despite all kinds of measures. I express deep sympathy to the bereaved families."

The premier ordered the authorities concerned to take all-out measures to check spread of the aedes mosquitoes beforehand to prevent recurrence of the disease.

She also highlighted her government's successes in different sectors, including agriculture, health, education, communication, aviation, ICT, women empowerment, tourism, power, sanitation, and sports.

Mentioning that Bangladesh's economy was now on a strong foundation, she said small shocks could not be a barrier to the way of progress.

Hasina said Bangladesh has become one of the five countries in the world in the economic advancement index.

She said the government has formulated a 100-year "Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100" to attain the desired goal of facing the adverse impact of climate change.

The 7th five-year plan is being implemented incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into it, while the work on formulating the 8th five-year plan has also started, the PM added.

She said there is a huge difference between today's Bangladesh and its position 10 years back. "The living standards of the people have improved significantly and their purchasing capacity has increased to a great extent."

On the relations with neighbouring countries, the PM said Bangladesh believes in moving ahead by maintaining good relations with its neighbouring countries and the world.

Hasina said Bangladesh wants to resolve bilateral disputes through dialogues. "This is not our weakness, rather a strategy. For that reason, we didn't step into the trap despite the provocation from the Myanmar side."

She said a case has been lodged with the International Court of Justice. "We hope that we will get a formula for permanently resolving the [Rohingya] issue."

Referring to the celebration of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the PM said the grand opening of the year-long programme would be held on March 17.

"We have already declared 2020-2021 as the 'Mujib Borsho'. The programmes of the golden jubilee of the independence and birth centenary of the Father of the Nation will continue simultaneously."

She said the celebration was not only a formality, its target was to infuse new strength into the national life and advance another step forward on the way to materialise the dream of the Father of the Nation.

If necessary, I will stand at court

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that if anything unexpected happens to Khaleda Zia, the government will [have to] shoulder all the responsibilities," the jurist said.

Asked whether he will appear as Khaleda's lawyer to seek her bail, he said, "Of course. As a professional lawyer, I will do so."

Replying to a question regarding whether there is any chance of seeking

her bail as she has already been denied by the Supreme Court, Kamal said, "There is a chance. We can seek bail as many times as we want."

He said denying bail is a violation of the constitution. "The demands we are placing for Khaleda Zia's treatment are not being met and that is also a violation of the constitution."

No one is beyond the constitution and if anyone violates it, they will

be held responsible, the noted constitution expert said.

Replying to a query, Kamal said, "We will continue our efforts to secure her bail."

He demanded immediate steps be taken by the government to ensure her proper treatment.

The steering committee also condemned the recent rape incident of the Dhaka University student.