

# Around half of brick fields in Barisal division illegal

SUSANTA GHOSE, Barisal

As many as 103 out of 245 brick fields in six districts of Barisal division have continued their illegal operation, ignoring several notices to take no-objection and clearance certificates from the Department of Environment (DoE) by installing modernised systems.

Using unsafe and outdated chimneys in defiance of environmental rules, they are causing air pollution and affecting soil fertility and plantations, said DoE officials.

Fifty-two out of 107 brick kilns in Barisal, four out of 25 in Jhalakathi, 21 out of 34 in Bhola, 10 out of 28 in Patuakhali, four out of 22 in Pirojpur and 12 out of 29 brick kilns in Barguna district are operating illegally, Barisal divisional DoE office sources said.

Twenty-five of the 103 legally operated brick kilns are using modernised chimneys.

They include one hybrid Hoffman chimney in Bhola, 14 Zig-Zag chimneys in Bhola, five in Barisal, three in Patuakhali and two in Barguna districts.

One hundred and seventeen other legal kilns have 120-foot-high chimneys.

Of the 103 illegal brick kilns, 65 are using 'band drum' chimneys and 38 others are using 120-foot-high but defective chimneys, Barisal DoE sources said, adding that.

The owners of the illegal brick kilns are conducting their business in sheer violation of the directives mentioned in the Brick Kiln Amendment Rule 2001, the



PHOTO: STAR

Owners of this brick kiln in Babuganj upazila of Barisal district resumed its illegal operation, shortly after officials of the Department of Environment fined them and issued order to stop its functioning in December last year.

DoE officials said.

As per directives of the rule, brick kilns should not be constructed around three kilometres of any human habitation, house, road and highway or crop field.

Besides, wood should not be used as fuel in a brick kiln.

Nazmul Haque, the DoE official in charge of Barisal division, said the office of the DoE deputy director in Barisal is running with only 11 officials and staffs to cover all types of environment issues in 40 upazilas under six districts of Barisal

division without any transport facility.

An organogram for the Barisal DoE office with 32-strong manpower including a director, a magistrate and three inspectors was approved long ago but it is yet to be materialised, he said.

"Despite our limitations, the DoE special enforcement team is conducting drives. In December last year, they fined Tk 40 thousand each to Muna Bricks and SB Bricks in Barisal district, and Tk 30 thousand, Tk 20 thousand

and Tk 10 thousand to RSF Bricks, Fatema Bricks and Anwar Bricks in Barguna district. The team also stopped operation of the brick kilns," he said.

Local sources, however, said the fined brick kilns again started their production shortly after departure of the DoE officials.

Eight other brick fields of Barisal division were given final notice on December 29 last year to stop their activities until installation of legally acceptable chimneys

and obtaining clearance from the DoE, sources said.

Maniruzzaman Rubel, president of Barisal Brick Kiln Owners Association, said, "After paying due government tax and duties, many brick kiln owners sought trade licenses and clearance from the DoE. But the district administration is losing huge revenue due to non-issuance of any fresh license for running brick fields in Barisal on the plea of some legal constraints."

EIGHT YEARS OVER

## No headway yet in case for killing Manik Saha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

There has been no headway in journalist Manik Saha murder case eight years into the incident.

Khulna correspondent of BBC and The New Age Manik Chandra Saha was bombed to death at noon on this day in 2004 near Khulna Press Club.

But trial of his murder case is yet to be completed at the court of the District and Sessions Judge of Khulna.

Two separate cases were recorded on January 17 of the same year with Khulna Sadar police station in connection with the murder. One was recorded under Section 302 of Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC) while the other under Explosive Substances Act.

Sub Inspector Ranjit Kumar Das filed the cases as complainant.

January 22 this year is the



Manik Saha

next date for hearing of the murder case recorded under Section 302 of BPC.

The date of hearing of the case is being shifted time and again as a prosecution witness (PW) failed to turn up in the court for deposition, said a court source.

The PW remained absent at the hearing of the case although the court summoned him thrice.

So, he has been summoned this time through the

secretary of a ministry to ascertain his presence at the court on January 22, the court source added.

Three out of the 14 charge-sheeted accused in the case have been killed in crossfire incidents while six are still in Khulna district jail, three a large and two on bail.

So far, 35 people have been named as prosecution witnesses in the case.

The case recorded under Explosive Substances Act is also under trial in the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge-1, Khulna, the source further said.

Meanwhile, Khulna Press Club and Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) have taken up separate programmes to observe the death anniversary of Manik Saha today.

The programmes include a discussion meeting and laying of wreaths at his memorial.

## Criminals brutally murder housewife in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Criminals brutally killed a housewife at Folaun village under Mostofapur union of Sadar upazila in Moulvibazar district on Friday night.

The victim, Sabita Rani Malaker, 38, wife of Monju Gopal Malaker of Folaun village, was found lying on the floor with a sackful of paddy on her chest and a pata (stone slab for grinding spices) on mouth when

Monju returned home at about 9:00pm, said locals and police.

That evening Sabita was alone in the house as Monju went out for doing private tuition.

Hearing Monju's hue and cry, neighbours rushed to his house and removed the paddy sack and the stone slab but found Sabita dead.

Informed, police from Moulvibazar Sadar Model Police Station went to the spot and sent the body to

Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital morgue.

Monju Gopal said there were Tk 8 thousand in cash and four tolas of gold ornament at his house but those were looted by the criminals.

"Police visited the spot and we are investigating whether the incident took place during robbery or it was a murder due to past enemy," said Abu Zafar Md Saleh, officer in charge of Moulvibazar Sadar Model Police Station.

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## Locals foil bid to kidnap headmaster

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Local people on Friday night foiled an alleged bid to kidnap the headmaster of Koirabari High School in Atghoria upazila of Pabna.

Headmaster Md Saiful Islam filed a case with Atghoria Police Station yesterday morning, accusing Md Abdul Hamid, a suspended teacher of the school, and six others.

In the case statement, Headmaster Saiful Islam alleged that Abdul Hamid, suspended on charge of corruption by the school authorities on May 17 in 2010, and his hired men stormed into his house at Koirabari village at around 9:30pm and tried to kidnap him and his son.

"As we cried for help, locals rushed to my house and chased the gang. But they could not catch hold of any of the gang members as a team of detective branch of police intercepted the villagers and helped the kidnappers flee," the headmaster stated.

Witnesses said villagers besieged the DB men, alleging that they (detectives) helped the gang escape from the village. Later, police reached the spot and rescued the DB men.

Refuting the allegation, a DB official said the detectives led by Sub-Inspector Md Zahid were carrying out a drive at the village at that time to arrest some criminals.

However, DB official Md Mostafa Harun said, headmaster Saiful Islam has already filed a complaint with the superintendent of police, accusing the DB team of helping the alleged kidnappers to escape.

"We are investigating the matter. If the allegation against the DB men proved to be true, we will take departmental action against them," the official added.

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