

Cropland fertility in peril as brick kilns use topsoil

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Several hundred acres of cultivable land in the district loses fertility every year as brick kilns are collecting huge quantities of earth from the topsoil of agricultural lands for making bricks.

Consequently, the affected lands remain uncultivable and fallow for years, affecting overall crop production.

The situation sees a worsening trend due to lack of strong monitoring from the district and upazila administrations.

There are 30 recommended brick kilns in the district and 22 of them are in Saidpur upazila only, said sources in the office of Nezarat Deputy Collector in the district.

Nokul Chandra Adhikari, manager of SKB brick kiln in Saidpur upazila, informed that the brick kilns in the district usually produce 30-35 lakh bricks annually.

It needs 1,000 cubic feet earth to produce 8,500 bricks and this can be collected from one foot surface of a 100-foot-long and 10-foot-wide land, he said.

And so, a brick kiln needs 3.53 lakh cubic feet earth to produce 30 lakh bricks and accordingly, 1.06 crore cubic feet of earth is used in the 30 brick kilns of the district.

Thus a brick kiln needs 12-15 acres of land to procure required volume of earth. So the top soil of 360-450 acres of land is being removed in a year by the 30 brick fields in the district.

As per existing rule of the government, a brick kiln cannot use more than two acres of land. But this rule is being deliberately violated as each brick kiln is using 12-15 acres of land under the nose of district



PHOTO: STAR

Workers dig and remove earth from the surface of cultivable land for use at the adjacent brick kiln in Saidpur upazila under Nilphamari district.

and upazila administrations, said Sreedam Das, an environmental activist.

With increase in earning and improvement of living standard in recent years, more people are inclined to construct multi-storied buildings and demand of bricks is on the rise.

To meet the enhanced demand, the brick kilns owners looking for more cultivable lands around the kilns to collect earth. For this they lure the farmers by giving handsome amounts of money.

Usually a farmer can earn only Tk 8,000-Tk 10,000 from a bigha of land

annually by cultivating paddy on a bigha of land (1 bigha = 30 decimal) in a year, said Zillur Rahman, former chairman of Ramnagar union parishad, also former owner of a brick kiln.

As the agents of brick kilns owners offer the land owner farmers Tk 20,000 Tk 30,000 in exchange of cutting one to three feet deep top soil from a bigha of land at a time in a year, many farmers gladly accept the proposal. He said.

Some brick kiln owners even adopt unfair means to compel the unwilling farmers to allow the cut-

ting earth from his land, locals said.

Visiting different brick kiln sights in Saidpur upazila on Sunday, this correspondent found that a large area of land in Niamatpur, Kadamtali, Kamarpukur, Aishdhal, Bromottor, Ashur Khai and Kalabagan villages has remained fallow.

Farmers Rashid Mia and Abdur Rahman living beside brick kilns at Ashur Khai village said that their five bighas of land is now uncultivable as they sold the top soil to brick kiln owners.

"All nutrients remain mixed in 6-9 inches of the

topsoil. If the topsoil is removed then the affected land becomes unproductive. Usually 4-5 years is needed for such a land to regain its previous fertility," said ABM Mostafizur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Nilphamari.

Nezarat Deputy Collector Zakaria Rahman said, "We are aware of violation of rules by many brick kiln owners. Environment directorate has taken action against a brick kiln in the district recently. We are not giving permission to open new brick kilns."

The Daily Star - **রবি** ENGLISH FAIR 250 more students of Jessore take part

OUR CORRESPONDENT
Benapole, Jessore

English language fair under English in Schools programme, a joint initiative of The Daily Star and mobile operator Robi, was held at a school in Chougachha upazila of Jessore district yesterday.

Adcom Ltd is the creative and event partner of the fair.

Around 250 students of Chougachha Model High school participated in the fair held at the school auditorium.

Md Kamal Ahmed, headmaster of the school opened the programme.

Globally renowned movie The Lion King was screened followed by



quizzes on vocabulary, one-word questions, situation-based questions, extempore speeches and role play. Students of the school took part in joyful interactions and entertained the audience by reciting poems, telling jokes and singing songs.

Twelve students won different competitions. Headmaster Kamal Ahmed distributed prizes among the winners at the end of the

programme.

Aiming to promote English language learning among school students across the country, The Daily Star in cooperation with Robi undertook English in Schools programme in 2009.

Under the initiative, each of one thousand schools selected from 64 districts of the country receives three complimentary copies of The Daily Star five days a week.

The ongoing English language fairs at different schools are being held in coordination with the education ministry as part of the three-year-long programme.

7 Hizb-ut Tawhid activists arrested in two districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The law enforcers arrested seven activists of Islamist outfit Hizb-ut Towhid from Rangpur and Barisal districts yesterday and the day before.

In Rangpur, police arrested five activist of the organisation from Nagdah village of Pirgachha upazila on Monday and seized leaflets and books on jihad from their possession, reports our correspondent.

The arrestees are Abdul Quddus, 28, Hamidul Islam, 26, Zafurul Islam, 23, Abul Kalam Azad, 60, and Solyman Ali Bhutto, 24, of the village.

Being informed by locals, police went to the village at noon and arrested the five Hizb-ut Tawhid men while

they were distributing leaflets and books on jihad, said Zahidur Rahman Chowdhury, officer in-charge of Pirgachha Police Station.

According to our Barisal correspondent, police arrested two Towhid members from Andhar Manik area in Mehendiganj upazila yesterday morning.

The arrestees are Joydul Abedin, 35, and his wife Halima Khatun, 25, of Darichar Khazuria area in the upazila.

Zulfikar Muhammad Gazzali, officer in-charge of Mehendiganj Police Station, said locals informed the police at around 1:00pm when the couple were distributing booklets and leaflets in the area and asking people to join the organisation.

Jubo League activist murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Jhenidah

Criminals hacked a local Jubo League activist dead in Puratan Kasba area of Jessore district town yesterday.

The victim was identified as Ruhul Amin, 26, son of Keramol Ali of the area.

Family members said Ruhul went out of their residence on Monday night on receiving a call over mobile phone and did not return home.

Being informed by locals, police recovered his body from Bhairab River in the morning and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

The gang might have killed Ruhul as he was the witness in party leader Ripon alias Bashi Ripon murder case, said Sub-Inspector Kamruzzaman.

Storm kills 3, damages 2,000 houses in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Lalmonirhat

Three people were killed and 20 others injured as storm lashed 10 villages in two upazilas of Lalmonirhat district yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Renuka Rani,

38, wife of Kshitish Chandra Roy of Chalbala village, Shafiqul Islam, 35, son of Monir Uddin of Kakina village, and Shamsul Islam, 42, son of Entazur Rahman of Gopalroy village.

Shafiqul and Shamsul died as trees fell on them while Renuka was killed by lightning during the storm,

said Amiruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station.

The injured were admitted to Aditmari and Kaliganj health complexes and Lalmonirhat Sadar hospital, police said.

The storm-hit villages are Mohishkocha, Polashi, Vadai and

Velabari under Aditmari upazila, and Kakina, Gopalroy, Chalbala, Shialkhowa, Rudreshwar and Jamirbari under Kaliganj upazila.

The storm hit the villages of the two upazilas at around 10:45pm and lasted for nearly 45 minutes, damaging at least 2,000 thatched and tin-roofed houses in the affected areas.

Over 1,000 trees were uprooted while paddy and maize on around 200 acres of land damaged, according to the officials of the two upazilas.

Afzal Hossain, 50, of Kakina village and Mohammad Ali, 45 of Vadai village in Aditmari upazila told this correspondent that the storm damaged paddy on his two acres of land.

"I along with family members have taken shelter at the house of one of our relatives as storm damaged my house. I need help to rebuild my house," said rickshaw-puller Noor Uddin of Gopalroy village in Kaliganj upazila.

Aditmari and Kaliganj upazila nirbahi officers and upazila chairmen visited the affected villages yesterday noon.



PHOTO: STAR

Uprooted large trees falling on a house at Kakina village in Kaliganj upazila leave it in a mangled form as a nor-wester sweeping across Kaliganj and Aditmari upazilas under Lalmonirhat district caused extensive damage to houses and trees yesterday.

GOOD NEWS FOR DELL PC & NOTEBOOK USERS!!!

- Troubleshoot your DELL branded PC or NOTEBOOK absolutely FREE.
- Come and Visit the 3 day long service camp to service your PC and experience the touch & feel of DELL products.
- Get to know what is new on the tech frontiers from DELL, Intel, Norton and Logitech.
- Participate in the hourly quiz and win prizes every 60 minute.

Free PC service

24-26 May 2012

Seminar

Raffle Draw

Hosted by

COMPUTER SOURCE

Media Partner

ATN NEWS **abc** **barta24.net**

Hotline : 01713365223

Dell PC Clinic

24-26 May, 2012

10am-8pm @ Marble Room

Hotel Ruposhi Bangla

www.facebook.com/DellBangladesh