



PHOTO: STAR

Labourers employed by a brick kiln owner at Modonerchak village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila dig up the topsoil for making bricks. The areas around almost all the brickfields in the district give similar images as the authorities concerned are turning a blind eye to the callous act, badly affecting the fertility of farmlands.

Brick kilns 'force' farmers into selling topsoil

Serious threat to soil fertility in Lalmonirhat

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Around 300 bighas of land loses the topsoil every year as farmers are lured or forced into selling it to brick kilns in five upazilas under the district.

The process causes serious decline of soil fertility in the agriculture-based northern district but the authorities concerned seem reluctant to take any step to save the farmlands from the influential brick kiln owners.

Topsoil from 9 to 10 bighas of land are needed to manufacture 10 to 12 lakh bricks in each of the 31 brick kilns in the district every year, said agriculture officials, bricks manufacturers and local farmers.

Topsoil is needed to manufacture first class bricks and labourers

employed by brick kiln owners collect it from the farmlands around, said Hadilur Rahman, a brick manufacturing worker at Madonerchak village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"Topsoil of one bigha of farmland is sold for Tk 6000 to Tk 12000 and a brick kiln owner buys topsoil from 9 to 10 bighas every year," said Jibon Chandra Saha, manager of a brick kiln at Madonerchak.

Brick kiln owners are collecting topsoil of two feet depth from the farmlands, much to the harm of soil fertility, said Jamal Uddin, Mansur Ali, Abdul Jabbar, Meher Ali, Sultan Miah and others of the same village.

"I got about 40 maunds of paddy from two bighas

of land three years ago, but the yield has declined by half as I sold the topsoil to a local brick kiln," said farmer Farhadul Islam at Doljor village of Aditmari upazila.

Kashem Ali, 60, a farmer at Bamonerbasa village of Kaliganj upazila, said he decided to sell topsoil of his two bighas of farmland to a local brick kiln owner this year, as his land faced water crisis after neighbouring lands were dug two feet deep a year ago.

Denying the allegation of creating pressure on the farmers to sell topsoil, Shahidul Islam, owner of ASB Brick Kiln at Bamonerbasa village in Kaliganj upazila, said, "We purchase topsoil from the farmers as we need it for manufacturing

bricks. We never face any objection from the agriculture department regarding the matter."

Large-scale use of topsoil for manufacturing bricks badly affects agriculture and causes harm to environment, said Mamunur Rashid, agriculture and environment coordinator of NGO RDRS Bangladesh.

He urged the authorities concerned to take immediate measure for stopping the harmful practice.

Abdul Mazid, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat, said, "Crop production falls to about 50 percent if the lands lose the topsoil. I will take necessary step with the help of district administration to save the farmlands from the brick kiln owners."

Wife killed for dowry, woman kills drug-addict husband

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband over a dowry-related conflict at Khudra Jamira village in Puthia upazila on Friday morning.

The deceased was identified as Munira Begam, 19, wife of Ismail, a resident of the village, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, since after their marriage, Ismail had often tortured Munira for dowry.

On Friday morning, he picked up a quarrel with Munira and beat her mercilessly over the issue, leaving her dead on the spot.

Being informed, police recovered the body with several injury marks and sent it to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Munira's father Munsur Rahman filed a case with the police station.

In Bandarban, a man was killed allegedly by her wife at Golachipa of Kuhlalong union in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Chyagga Prue Marma, 42, husband of Renuma Marma, reports our correspondent.

Both were workers at a rubber garden in the area.

Police said, they recovered the body of Chyagga Prue from a house at the rubber garden in the morning. The body bore marks of injury, they said.

According to the family sources, Chyagga was a drug addict and often tortured Renuma for money.

At around 10:00pm on Friday, Chyagga demanded money from his wife and locked in a quarrel as Renuma refused to give money.

At one stage, an agitated Renuma hit her husband indiscriminately with a rod, leaving him injured. Locals found him dead in the early hours.

Neighbour kills madrasa kid for Tk 10 thousand!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police recovered the body of a 12-year-old slain madrasa student from a remote village of Salanga upazila under Sirajganj district and arrested the alleged killer from his village home in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibanda district Friday evening.

Md Parvez, 22, of Kathalbaria village in Gobindaganj upazila, also a Kamil student of Mohonganj Kamil Madrasa in the area, killed his neighbour Zahidul Islam after snatching Tk 10 thousand from the boy, police said.

Zahidul, son of Abu Hanjela of Kathalbaria

village, was a Class II student of Kathalbaria Dakhil Madrasa.

"Informed by locals, police recovered the body from a marsh at Radhanagar Chakpara of Salanga upazila Friday afternoon and sent to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy. The victim was strangled and the body dumped there probably on Thursday," said Rashidul Islam Biswas, officer in charge (OC) of Salanga Police Station.

ABM Jahidul Islam, OC of Gobindaganj police station, said, "Parvez instigated Zahidul to bring Tk 10 thousand from home for travelling to the capital. Zahid

managed Tk 10 thousand in absence of his father and went out with Parvez on January 14."

"In the name of travelling to Dhaka, Parvez took him to the remote village in Sirajganj and killed him after taking away the money the next day. Police arrested Parvez from his residence on Friday evening and he confessed to the crime," he said.

"The victim's father filed a case with Gobindaganj police station, mentioning that Parvez killed Zahidul for Tk 10 thousand in collusion with his father Nur Hossain. Nur managed to escape after the incident," the OC said.

LAND DISPUTES

Acid thrown on woman, 2 killed

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A woman sustained burn injuries in an acid attack following a dispute over a piece of land at Tattiyul village in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar district yesterday.

The victim is Phuljan Begum, 42, wife of Solyaman Miah of the village. She was admitted to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital with wounds in her face and legs, reports our correspondent.

Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between Ashik Miah and Subhan Miah over the land.

On Friday, Subhan Miah erected a boundary wall on the land. Enraged by the incident, Ashik and his younger brother Parvez Mia swooped on the house of Subhan Mia yesterday morning. During the incident, they threw acid on Phuljan, alleged Subhan.

Away in Chuadanga, a man was killed in a clash between two rival groups over a piece of disputed land at Gobindohuda in Damurhuda upazila on Friday.

The dead is Mohsin Ali, 45, son of Dukhu Mondal of

the village, reports our correspondent.

Police and locals said there had been a longstanding dispute between one Mowla Box and Nurul Haque over the land in the area.

As a sequel to the conflict, the supporters of the duo attacked each other with lethal weapons, leaving four from both sides injured.

Of them, Mohsin was rushed to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital where he died on Friday night.

In Mymensingh, a man was killed by his nephew over a land dispute at Dewkhali village in Pulphur upazila of the district yesterday.

The dead is Ashraf Ali, 75, reports our correspondent.

Police quoted locals as saying that there had been a longstanding dispute between Ashraf Ali and his nephew Sohrab Ali over 28 decimals of land.

As Ashraf was preparing the land to cultivate crop at noon, Sohrab went there and locked in an altercation with his uncle.

At one stage, Sohrab hit Ashraf with a sharp weapon, leaving him dead on the spot.

Jute godowns, shops gutted

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A devastating fire burnt to ashes the godowns of two jute mills at Kutu Bazaar under Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria district yesterday.

The mills are Habib (Govt) Jute Mill and Krishna Shah (Private) Jute Mill, reports our correspondent.

According to Kasba fire service and civil defense office sources, the fire that broke out at Krishna Shah Jute Mill soon engulfed the adjacent Habib Jute Mill.

Abul Bashar, station officer at Kasba fire office, said properties and jute worth Tk. two crore were damaged by the fire.

In Mymensingh, a fire gutted at least 16 shops and several houses at Kashiganj Bazar in Tarakanda upazila early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Police said, the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a paint shop in the market around midnight and soon spread to the adjoining shops and houses.

On information, three units from Mymensingh and Netrakona Fire Station rushed to the spot and doused the fire after three hours of frantic efforts.

Affected owners claimed that valuables worth Tk 2.5 crore were damaged in the fire.

SNIPPETS

Domestic help tortured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

An underage girl of the district, who had been working as a domestic help in Dhaka city, was severely tortured allegedly by the members of her master's family. Sumona Begum, 13, daughter of Shawkat Khan of Bangram area in Sadar upazila is now undergoing treatment at Gopalganj Sadar Hospital. Shawkat said, driven by poverty, he sent Sumona to Dhaka along with one Rabeya Tapashi of the same village early last year to look for a job there. A few days after Sumona joined the work at Dhanmondi in Dhaka the house members started blaming and torturing her and threatened her of dire consequences if she disclose it to others. On January 13, they sent her back to Gopalganj in a bad shape. As her condition started to worsen, Sumona's family took her to the hospital. Residential Medical Officer (RMO) of Gopalganj Sadar Hospital Dr Ashit Kumar Mallik said the condition of Sumona was unlikely to improve soon.

Police hurt in own gunshot

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A police constable received serious injury in the thigh as he pressed the trigger of his own shotgun by mistake during a joint forces' drive in Harindia-Mamunshia area under Kotchandpur upazila of the district yesterday afternoon. The constable was identified as Ripon of Kotchandpur police station. He was rushed to Jessore Medical College Hospital. Officer in-charge of Kotchandpur police station Shahjahan Ali said, Ripon was a member of the joint forces' team that went to nab the criminals who set fire to Harindia-Mamunshia Primary School on the general elections day on January 5 last.

2 boys rescued from trafficker

UNB, Joypurhat

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued two boys from the clutches of an alleged human trafficker at Chakgupal village in sadar upazila on Friday. The boys are Shamim, 12, and Jamal, 10, and residents of Ranisagor in Ranisankail upazila of Thakurgaon district. Sources at Rab-5 Joypurhat camp said, Shamim and Jamal are students of a madrasa in Damuirhat upazila of Naogaon. In the afternoon, when the boys came to Joypurhat rail station way home, a human trafficker named Anwar Hossain offered them to them to their houses. While passing through the village, the boys sensed the evil motive of Anwar and started screaming, leading locals to rush in. They rescued the two boys and caught Anwar and handed over them to Rab. During interrogation, Anwar confessed to Rab that he had attempted to traffic the two boys to India.



PHOTO: STAR

Horses with riders vie for victory at the traditional race held at a field in Madhupur upazila under Tangail district yesterday. Around 50 riders from different districts, including Tangail, Mymensingh, Bogra, Natore and Jamalpur, take part in the traditional horse race organised by Akashi Bangabandhu Club in Madhupur in cooperation with Gazi TV and Walton.

15 sued over Jubo League man killing

UNB, Jessore

A case was filed on Friday against 15 people in connection with the killing of Rafiqul Islam Shipon, organising secretary of Jessore town unit of the ruling Awami League's youth wing Jubo League.

Tania Akter Rubi, Shipon's wife, filed the case with Kotwali Police Station.

Meanwhile, law enforcers arrested Rokeya Begum, main accused in the case, and two youths Jony and Sohel Farazi in connection with the killing.

A gang of criminals opened fire on Shipon while he was gossiping at a tea stall at Ghop Beltala in the district town at about 8:00pm on Wednesday.

With bullet wounds in the head and chest, the Jubo League leader was rushed to Jessore 250-Bed Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Elephants kill man in Bandarban, damage houses in Jamalpur

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A farmer was trampled to death by wild elephants in Ashartoli area of Nakkhongchhari upazila Bandarban district on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Md. Nurul Islam, 56, of the village, reports our correspondent.

Locals said, a herd of elephants entered the area in search of food at dead of night.

They swooped on the locals and trampled Nurul when the villagers tried to drive them away, said upazila nirbahi officer Ahmed Jamil. Nurul died on the spot, the UNO said.

Wild elephants killed four in the last five months in the area, he added.

In Jamalpur, wild ele-

phants damaged 16 houses and crops on 30 acres of land at Makhonerchar village in Dewanganj upazila of the district on Friday night, reports our correspondent.

Locals said a herd of wild elephants entered the village from India's Meghalaya state at around 10:30pm and damaged the houses belonging to Billal Hossain, Zahidul Islam, Saidur Rahman, Anwar Hossain, Jahurul Islam and Shafikul Islam.

They also ate up paddy stored at the warehouses of the families.

Later, the animals damaged wheat and mustard plants on 30 acres of land at the village, said Abdur Rashid, chairman of Dandhora Union Parishad.

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