



Logs of trees are kept at a brick field at Ichadi village in Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali to burn as firewood, defying rules.

PATUAKHALI, BARGUNA

Firewood-based brick kilns pose threat to environment

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Brick kilns in Patuakhali and Barguna districts are illegally using firewood instead of coal to fire the kilns. On average, about 2,400 tons of firewood are burned in a brick kiln per year, which pollutes the atmosphere and also threatens the natural environment.

A source of Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office said there are only 32 approved brick kilns in the district, but there are around 80 brick kilns without approval in different areas of the district. There are 170 approved brick kilns in all six districts of Barisal division, but around double that number are running without approval from the district administrations concerned.

A fireman of a brick kiln in Patuakhali Sadar upazila said at least 300 tons of firewood are needed to burn one round (six lacs) bricks. Thus, 2,400 tons are burned per year in a brick kiln as around eight rounds bricks are burned every season from December to April.

About two lakh tons of firewood are burned every

year in 80 brick kilns in the eight upazilas of Patuakhali district, a source said. To meet the demand for firewood, a huge number of trees are cut down in different areas in the district, including reserve forest, every year, he added.

Using firewood in brick kilns is a punishable offense, but most owners of brick kilns use firewood by 'managing' the local administration.

"We are forced to burn firewood in brick kilns as there is a shortage of coal," said the owner of a brick field under Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) conducted a survey on all 14 brick kilns of Amtali upazila of Barguna district in April 2015. In the survey report they said all the kilns were set up beside croplands and homesteads.

The report also said firewood was used in nine brick kilns and coal in five kilns, while illegal drum chimneys were used in seven kilns.

Owners of brick kilns use firewood as it is cheaper and more easily available than coal. Coal has to be brought

from far away and transportation cost is high, sources said.

Regarding the Himalayan Hindu Kush (HHK) region, the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) mentioned that the countries of HHK region, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, China, India, Myanmar and Afghanistan, have been affected by rising emissions of air pollutants from urban, industrial, and rural sources. It raised concerns about deteriorating air quality, impacts on health and visibility. Illegal brick kilns are responsible for severe air pollution, ICIMOD added.

There are 6,338 approved brick kilns in Bangladesh, one lakh in India, 11,000 in Pakistan and only 750 in Nepal, a source added.

Lincon Bayen, Barisal divisional coordinator for BELA, said firewood was used in most brick kilns in Bangladesh, and the government should take steps to discourage this practice to protect the environment.

Production of different types of crops, including

paddy and lentils is decreasing day by day due to the impact of the brick kilns. About 30 to 35 maunds of paddy are produced on land far from brick kilns, but only 15 to 20 maunds are produced on land near a brick kiln, he said.

Md. Mannan Howlader, farmer of Tiakhali village under Amtali upazila, said brick kilns affect even fruits like green coconut and jackfruit.

Sukumar Biswas, director of the Environmental Department, said they are conducting mobile court regularly and will take action if any irregularities are found there.

"We demolish kilns which used drum chimneys," he added.

The area covered by forest land is decreasing day by day in the district, and environment is under threat, A K M Mostafa Zaman, dean for disaster management department for Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU), said.

Government should take stern action to control brick kilns so they don't use firewood as it pollutes the air, cropland and trees, he added.

Five return from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Four Bangladeshi women and a minor girl returned home through Benapole check post in Jessore district on Wednesday after serving two years' jail in an Indian prison.

The returnees are Sarmeen Akhter, 19, daughter of Awlad Hossain Talukder, Rehana Khatun, 20, daughter of Sabur Sheikh, Ruma Khatun, 21, daughter of Abdur Rahim, Sajeda Bagum, 19, daughter of Akhter Hossain, and her seven-year-old daughter Mohinee. They hail from Sathkhira district.

A team of Indian police arrested the five two on charge of entering India illegally two and a half years ago.

They were later sent to Kolkata Central Jail, said Mominur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Benapole immigration police.

Indian immigration police handed over them to Bangladeshi immigration police at night, said the OC.

Employer pours boiling water on maid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A domestic help sustained burn injuries as her employer's wife allegedly poured boiling water on her in Kamalganj upazila of the district on Tuesday.

The victim is Taslima Akhter, 20, daughter of late Rahim Miah of Choitanyaganj village in the upazila.

Taslima had been working at Ayaz Miah's house at Borokapon village as domestic help for the last one year, said the victim's brother Modhu Miah.

Ayaz and his family members often tortured Taslima over trivial matters, he alleged.

"On Tuesday night, Ayaz's wife Sultana Begum poured boiling water on Taslima following an altercation over a trivial matter," said Modhu.

Being informed, Modhu and some locals rescued Taslima from the house and sent her to the upazila health complex.

Tragic!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A schoolgirl died when her scarf got entangled with a wheel of an auto-rickshaw in Mohammadpur upazila of Magura district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as seventh grader Mim Khatun, 14, daughter of Nizam Uddin of Khalia village in the upazila.

The incident took place around 1:00pm when she was returning home from her aunt's residence at Dafolbaria village in the upazila, said the victim's father.

Critically injured Mim later died at Magura Sadar Hospital, he said.

Man jailed in dowry case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A Jessore court yesterday sentenced a man to two years' imprisonment in a dowry case.

The convict is Abdullah Munshi, son of Golam Munshi of Jorolia village in Sadar upazila of Narail district. The court also fined the convict Tk 2,000. In default, he is to suffer another month in jail.

According to the prosecution, Abdullah married Pervin, daughter of Sayed Ali of Dariaghata village in the upazila in 1999. After the marriage, he had been demanding Tk one lakh as dowry from his father-in-law, and used to torture his wife over the issue.

On August 26, 2014, Pervin filed a case with the Jessore Judicial Magistrate's Court.

FIVE MUNICIPALITIES IN PABNA

AL, BNP face rebel candidates

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Both Awami League and BNP face rebel candidates in five of the seven municipalities the district for the election to be held on December 30.

As many as 33 mayoral candidates and 243 councillor candidates in seven municipalities are conducting door to door contacts to woo voters as the election campaign gains momentum a few days ahead of the polls.

Rebels, especially those belonging to AL have alleged that their intra-party rivals are creating impediment to the election campaign in different areas.

AL rebel Tofazzal Hossain, also the sitting mayor of Sujanagar municipality, said,

"Wahab's men attacked my election campaign in Khanpara of Sujanagar municipality area on December 14. They also attacked my campaign team on December 15 in Manikdir village and damaged posters and banners in several areas."

"They disturbed my election campaign to remove me from the race. I was elected as rebel candi-

date in last municipality election and I have the support from people this election too," said Tofazzal Hossain, also secretary of upazila unit of Jubo League.

Refuting the allegation, AL aspirant Abdul Wahab, secretary of upazila AL, said, "A group of criminals attacked my men during the election campaign. Some people backed by a few party leaders supported the rebel candidate, defying party decision."

In Chatmohar, AL rebel Mirza Rezaul Karim Dulal, also the sitting mayor, alleged that the men of AL aspirant Shakhawat Hossain are threatening general voters not to cast vote for him.

Mirza Rezaul is also joint secretary of the upazila unit of AL.

On the other hand, AL aspirant Shakhawat Hossain, also president of the upazila unit of AL, claimed that the party men are united behind him and the rebel candidate, realising the real picture of election race, is spreading rumour against him.

Similar allegation was found in Bhangura, Faridpur and Santhia municipalities.

Of the seven municipalities both AL and BNP face 'rebel problem' in five municipalities.

BNP also faces rebel candidates in the five municipalities.

Local sources, however, said the rebel candidates are not that strong.

In Ishwardi upazila, there is no rebel candidate of the party but intra-party conflict has appeared as a trouble for the party nominated candidate.

BNP has nominated Mokhlesur Rahman Bablu as the party candidate in Ishwardi municipality but his rival Jakaria Pintu is working against party decision.

District unit of BNP has issued a show cause notice against Ishwardi municipality BNP secretary Jakaria Pintu and his fellows vice president Jahidur Rahman Bishws, organising secretary Islam Hossain Sumon and JCD president Imrul Kayes Sumon.

"They have been served notice for not working in favour of the party nominee. If they do not rectify themselves, they will be punished," said Johurul Islam, office secretary of district unit BNP.



Thousands of Buddhists from Chittagong Hill Tracts and the plain lands observed the annual Buddha and Acharya Puja, 2015, in Bandarban yesterday. To mark the occasion, indigenous girls showered petals on the road in front of a chariot pulled by Buddhist devotees.

7 drug peddlers held with gun, Yaba in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Detective Branch (DB) of police in separate drives arrested seven alleged drug peddlers in the district yesterday and the day before.

They also seized a shooter gun, five bullets, 312 bottles of Indian wine, four kilograms of hemp, 100 Yaba tablets and 100 grams of heroine from their possession.

On secret information, the law enforcers raided Guthail Bazar area in Islampur upazila early yesterday and arrested three with a shooter gun, five bullets and 312 bottles of Indian wine.

The arrestees are Md Matiar Pramanik, 42, son of late Nurul Haque Pramanik, Md Shahjama, 28, son of

Abdul Berek Sheikh and Md Samchhel Mirza, 25, son of Abul Mirza of Dighalkandi village in Saghata upazila in Gaibandha district.

Two cases were filed with Sadar Police Station, accusing the three, Poilce Superintendent Nizam Uddin said at a press briefing at his office in the district town yesterday noon.

In another drive, a team of DB police, led by Sub-Inspector Mostak Ahmed, arrested another drug peddler, Shafiqul Islam Yusuf, 42, son of late Mojibur Rahman of Alatoli in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi district, from bus stand area in Jamalpur town the same day.

They also seized 100 Yaba tablets and 50 grams of

heroine from his possession. A case was filed with the police station, against him in this connection, said the SP.

Later, the arrestees were produced in a court that sent them to jail, he said.

On Wednesday, detectives arrested three drug peddlers with four kg of hemp and 50 grams of heroine at Topkarchar village in Dewanganj upazila of the district.

The arrestees are Rezaul Karim, 40, son of late Koresh Ali, Sohel, 20, son of Mojibur Rahman and Bakul Hossain, 30, son of late Dulal Hossain of the village.

Two cases were filed in this connection, said Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dewanganj Police Station.



In a secure location away from hunters, hundred of birds in Patuakhali town opt for police protection each evening, roosting on a jackfruit tree in Patuakhali Police Station complex.

Patuakhali birds favour police protection

SOHRAB HOSSAIN with ANDREW EAGLE

Shortly before sunset, hundreds of birds routinely descend upon Patuakhali town's police station. Attracted by a handsome ten-year-old jackfruit tree in the compound, members of several avian species have adopted the habit of roosting there.

Just as humans turn to the police for security, so do the birds. According to local advocate Abul Kalam Azad while there are other trees in town that might serve the same purpose for the birds, they choose the jackfruit

tree to pass the night peacefully, free of the threat of hunters.

"The birds arrive every evening in large numbers to take shelter," says sub-inspector Md. Shakil. "There is no avoiding their chirping twice a day: when they arrive and early of a morning as they depart. We enjoy it."

Situated in the middle of a zero-shaped building, the jackfruit tree is hardly the most accessible tree. Yet the birds don't seem to mind.

"Birds fly through the building to reach the tree," says sub-inspector J M Masum who also enjoys the phenomenon. "We'd like to

feed them also," he says, "but we have no chance since they stay here only to sleep."

According to the police, the tree is particularly busy for the six months following April, and quieter during the winter when many birds leave, only to return as the weather once again warms. Sparrows, martins, weaverbirds and cuckoos are among the species represented.

Md. Imran Khan, a student of Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute, meanwhile, has another theory as to why so many birds favour the tree. "The town has fewer

sites for them to shelter than it used to," he observes, "as bushy trees and bamboo clumps have been cleared."

As such, former assistant professor of Patuakhali Government College zoology department, Pijush Kanti Hori, believes it important to maintain the jackfruit tree as a roosting site where the birds feel safe. "Some species face extinction from hunting," he says, "They need protecting not only from hunters, but also during storms."

And for the birds of Patuakhali, protection means police protection...



Journalists form a human chain in front of Rangpur deputy commissioner's office yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the killers of Mashiur Rahman Utsho, staff reporter of the Daily Juger Alo.