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National

## Brick kilns near reserve forest in Tangail



This brick kiln, adjoining the reserve forest at Baheratali in Sakhipur upazila of Tangail district, has continued operation in violation of environmental rules that prohibit setting up of any brick kiln within three kilometres from a reserve forest. Ironically, no drastic action has been taken although the office of Baheratali Forest Range Reserve officer is only a few hundred metres away. Photo: STAR

Mirza Shakil, Tangail

Defying law, local influential people have set up brick kilns near the reserve forest at Baheratoil in Sakhipur upazila.

As per law, brick kilns are not allowed in and around 3 kilometers of any reserve forest.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found two kilns burning bricks by using firewood only about 300 to 400 meters away from the range officer's workplace.

Locals told the correspondent that the kilns were set up about a year ago. They have been burning wood in collusion with some officials of the forest range.

Baheratoil Forest Range Officer Shahidul Islam said he had informed the matter to higher authorities immediately after the construction of the kilns.

"I wrote to the authorities so that the kilns do not get approval."

Zillur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Environment (DoE) in Tangail, said his office did not give permission to any of the kilns for burning bricks in the area.

"We will conduct drives to evict the brick kilns soon," he added.

Abdur Rahim, owner of Pubali Brick Kiln, said that he applied to the DoE for its permission to burn bricks.

"I hope to get it soon," he said.

Farid Hossain, owner of SRF Brick Kiln that also set up adjacent to the forest in the same area, claimed he had no scope to burn firewood at the kiln as it was equipped with modern technology.

According to forest office sources, more than 122,876 acres of land were covered with forests in five upazila of Tangail district. Of the total, 55,476 acres were marked as reserved forests.

There are 47,220 acres of forest in Sakhipur, 45,565 acres in Madhupur, 21,855 acres in Ghatail, 7,576 acres in Mirzapur and 669 acres in Kalihati.

Of the reserved forests, 38,232 acres are in Sakhipur, 7,225 acres in Mirzapur, 7,251 acres in Ghatail, 2,500 acres in Madhupur and 185 acres in Kalihati.

More than 100 kilns are burning bricks around Madhupur forest in seven upazila in the district, sources concerned informed.

During a recent raid, both the aforesaid brick kilns were fined.



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