

## Odisha: Kilns raise pollution concern

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**JAGATSINGHPUR:** A good number of illegal brick kilns have come up in the district and environmentalists have opined that these brick kilns are responsible for rise in temperature in the region as well as land degradation and air pollution. Sources said thousands of brick kilns are operating in Kujang, Erasama, Tirtol, Raghunathpur, Biridi, Balikuda, Jagatsinghpur and Naugaon areas with many of them running illegally. Brick kiln owners, allegedly in connivance with revenue officials, have been running their business and violating pollution norms. It is found that most of the illegal brick kilns have

been set up on agricultural land and river banks.

They make brisk business from November to May and each unit produces five lakh to 10 lakh bricks annually by rendering the lands unsuitable for agriculture. Mushrooming of illegal brick kilns in eight tehsils has led to land degradation, soil erosion, rise of temperature and air pollution in the area.

Environmentalists alleged that in 2005, the Forest and Environment department had issued a direction to ensure that no brick kiln be set up within 250 metres of flood embankment and 500 metres away from the river beds where there are no flood embankments. Also, a kiln should not be within 50 metres radius of agricultural and horticultural lands.

A minimum distance of 200 metres should be maintained in case of roads. Though the brick kiln owners have violated the direction of the State Government and provisions under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, no action has been taken to check the practice. Though there is a ban on setting up brick kilns in agriculture land, it is blatantly violated. Besides, continuous digging of earth also weakens the embankments of Mahanadi, Devi, Paika, Chitrotopla and other small rivers of the district. A kiln, having a chimney, reportedly uses about tonnes of wood and coal daily during the brick making season. The use of wood and coal creates profuse carbon dioxide emission. The mercury level rises in the vicinity of brick kiln areas particularly in summer, environmentalists added.

Sarpanch of Sailo panchayat Rosalini Mohapatra said illegal brick kilns have been operating in different villages of the panchayat under Kujang tehsil. The owners use tonnes of top soil to manufacture bricks and as a result, acres of fertile lands are turning into barren making unsuitable for agriculture, she added.

Meanwhile, a team, led by Kujang Tehsildar Ramesh Chandra Panda, raided several illegal brick kilns in Rahama, Raigana, Jailar and Sailo areas recently and collected fines.

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