

Patuakhali town, 40 shoals flooded: Demonstration for protection of dam

MD SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Most areas of Patuakhali town and at least 40 shoals in Galachip and Dashmina coastal upazilas have been inundated due to pressure of floodwater from the upstream areas and high tide under the influence of full moon.

The floodwater rolling from central areas of the country can not flow into the sea as the sea level is 4-5 feet higher than normal due to the full moon, according to sources in the Water Development Board.

The water level in the district will start receding after full moon ends today, they said.

Rains in different areas of the district since Tuesday aggravated the situation, administration sources in different upazilassaid.

They said many of the 40 affected shoals are under by 3-4 feet water now.

These include Char Gongga, Char Halim, Char Gunmukha, Char Karforma, Char Bangla, Char Chalitabunia, Char Lata in Galachipa and Rangapahdi, Khalisha Khali and Alipur in Dashmina upazila.

At least 35,000 people have been affected there.

Water is stagnant in most areas of the town for the last several days.

These areas go under water during flood or high tide as the town protection embankment-cum-drainage project taken up seven years ago is yet to be implemented.

The townspeople led by Municipal Chairman Mostaq Ahmed and Ward Commissioner Mustafizur Rahman Rumi brought out a procession and held a rally in the town demanding implementation of the project.

Addressing the rally in front of the



PHOTO: STAR

One of 40 shoals inundated by flood in Patuakhali. The picture was taken from Bauphal on Saturday.

Patuakhali Press Clud, the municipal chairman called upon the people to build up a movement for implementation of the town protection embankment.

The town is surrounded by Patuakhali river on the north and by Kohalia river on the east. Waters from the rivers roll into the town during high tide.

The Tk 17.27 crore project was taken up after the visit of the then agriculture minister Majid-ul-Haque to Patuakhali in 1997.

It includes construction 7 4.20 km flood control embankment, sluice gates in 38 outlets, one km wall and installation of four power pumps.

The Water Resources Ministry okayed the project in 2001 but it is

awaiting approval by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC).

WDB Executive Engineer Abdul Majid Mollah told this correspondent that at least 100 km flood control embankments have been damaged by the current flood.

Out of school to earn for families

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Russel, Ruhul, Sumon, Kuddus, and Anwar, all aged between 11 and 15 of Khaserhat village in Patuakhali Sadar upazila, left school due to poverty.

They now earn at least Tk 1000 each per month by making candles.

The five friends themselves market their products. Russel is the team leader.

But they have qualms because they are not getting the scope for education though they want it.

They make candle at the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES), a

local NGO at Khaserhat in the Sadar upazila, about 15 kilometres from the district town.

Thirteen year-old Russel said he left school two years' back when he was a student of class five. His father then used to earn only Tk 40 a day at a battle leaf field, which was not enough

for buying even rice for their family with four brothers and three sisters.

He came to the centre and took three month's training.

Now he earns Tk 1000 per month and contributes the amount to his family.

The small NGO runs the factory at its office, where some distressed women also work.

Many others want to join them but the scope is limited, Anisuzzan, an official of the NGO, told this correspondent during a recent visit.

The CMES launched this small venture in January 200.

The candles are marketed in Patuakhali and Barguna districts. "We had to work hard to convince wholesalers as well as retailers", said Russel.

"Now local businessmen are sympathetic to us. They now say our products are better than others", he said.

Anisuzzam said they are trying to expand the project by buying some new machines. It is a sustainable venture with a small capital, he said.

Ruhul was busy packing cendles. "My father Abdur Razzak is a rickshawpuller. I stopped going to school due to poverty".

The five boys now realise that education is necessary but they do not have the scope. They will go to school if they get the chance.

Anisuzzam said he is thinking how to provide them the scope, either at the NGO office or at any school.

Bewildered fish farmers in Barisal

3,811 out of 5,000 listed farms empty in Barisal, Tk 9 cr fishes washed away

AKTER FARUK SHAHIN, Barisal

Aziz Mia cultivated fish in 15 ponds in Ahailjhara this year, five owned by him and 10 leased from others at Tk 12 lakh.

He had hoped sales at over Tk 30 lakh in two months and invested money by borrowing from banks and NGOs and selling a part of his ancestral land.

All his hopes are now washed away by surging floods. He even can not locate his ponds. There are vast sheets of water all around. He is now worried how to repay the loans.

Aziz Mia now moves from one place to another on a boat cursing his luck.

There are several thousand fish farmers in the district like Aziz Mia.

During a visit on Friday, many fish farmers were seen trying to protect fishes by putting nets on submerged banks of ponds.

But this is a futile effort because fishes have already gone out of most of the ponds due to the sudden rise in water level, said Kabir and Habib of Goila village and Milon Mallick of Sheral in Agailjhara.

The small quantities they are netting have to be sold at throwaway prices as traders are not coming from other

districts due to flood. The quantity sold at Tk 4,000 earlier is not selling even at Tk 300 now, they said.

Very few fish farmers could take protective measure.

Habib Khan of Gouranadi cultivated fish in 34 ponds and enclosures. On hearing the news of rushing floodwater, he collected all the big mother fishes, preserved those in a big pond and protected it with nets. Yet the loss would be around Tk 17 lakh, he told this correspondent.

According to the district fishery department, out of about 5,000 farms enlisted with it, fishes in 3811 have been washed away by floodwater. They estimated the loss at around Tk 9 cr 16 lakh. Over one lakh people were engaged in the 5000 fish farms.

Besides the enlisted farms, about 2000 small ponds and water bodies have been equally affected. The loss is yet to be estimated.

Fishery officials said steps would be taken to rehabilitate the fish farmers after flood.



PHOTO: STAR

An worried Aziz Mia on boat ponders how to repay the loans.

Boy rescued from Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A minor boy was rescued from Benapole Land Port area in Jessore on Saturday.

The rescued boy is Nuruzzaman, 12, son of Samsuzzaman of Khagradana village in Shyamnagar upazila.

An organised gang of traffickers abducted Nuruzzaman and two other girls Marzina, 15, daughter of Majibar Rahman and Rabeya, 13, daughter of Shukur Ali and, 12, from the same village on July 14, police sources told this correspondent.

Police rescued Marzina and Rabeya from Rotowpur, a bordering village in Kaliganj upazila on July 19. Police also arrested their trafficker Abdus Salam of Malenga village in Kaliganj upazila. Nuruzzaman was rescued after Salam's confession to police.

Police said, the boys and the girls were abducted for trafficking to India. A case was filed with Kaliganj Thana.

Ex-army officer held on charge of 'harbouring criminals'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A former army officer was arrested on charge of his alleged involvement in crimes including murder on Friday.

Sonadanga Thana police arrested ex-captain Mahmud Hasan, also owner of a health club situated on South Central Road here.

He harbours criminals in guise of health club owner, according to police. Moreover, he maintains liaison with an outlawed party. He was sent to district jail on Saturday.

Panic of snakes at a Satkhira village

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Panic of snake has gripped the people of Murarikati village in Kalaroa upazila and its adjoining areas.

Twenty-five people fell victims of snakebite at Kazipara and Sheikhpara of the village in three days.

The victims are Kazi Naim Arif, 12, Jani, 11, Kazi Saidul, 30, Tahmina, 25, Noor Nahar, 19, Rozina, 20, Rani, 2, Fatema, 18, and a five month old child Afid at Kazipara and Hasan, 12, Alek Gazi, 40, Mahmuda, 25, Sheuli, 18, Mina, 25, Athai, 4, and Jahanara, 13, at Sheikhpara. Of them Naim, 10, Arif, 12, Saidul, 30, Tahmina, 25, and Rozina, 20. They were admitted to Satkhira hospital.

Local people are arranging milad mahfils to get rid of snakes.

Villagers are not coming out of their houses after evening. They cannot ascertain what kind of snakes are biting them as they did not see the snakes, they told this correspondent.

SNAPS

Zia Fertiliser resumes production

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Ashuganj Zia Fertilizer Company Limited (ZFCL) has resumed production of urea on Friday. Production was suspended on July 17 for overhauling of the factory. The work was supposed to be completed in ten days but it took 13 days. It is now producing 1500 tonnes of urea a day, sources at the factory said.

2 Patuakhali CPB leaders arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Two CPB (Communist Party of Bangladesh) leaders were arrested here on Saturday night. Patuakhali Thana police arrested the president and secretary of Sadar upazila units of the party Nasir Uddin Khan and Subhas Chandra. Police said they were arrested as per 'order of the higher authorities.' CPB was scheduled to bring out a procession in the town on Sunday demanding realisation of its six-point demand. The demands included reduction of water supply connection fee and monthly water bills. A meeting was also scheduled to be held in front of the party office. But police foiled the CPB programme.

SHAMSUR RAHMAN MURDER CASE Charge-sheeted accused evades arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A charge-sheeted accused of sensational Journalist Shamsur Rahman Murder Case escaped arrest on Friday.

Top criminal Asaduzzaman Litu fled away from his West Baniakhmar house minutes before a raid by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

However, his three younger brothers Moniruzzaman Elu, Ershaduzzaman Dollar and Wahiduzzaman Shagor and six others Tutul, Dalim, Ripon, Mamun,

Liquat and Saiful were caught from their houses in the same area. Two rounds of revolver bullets and sharp weapons were also recovered from them.

The arrested persons are listed criminals and they are being questioned at Rab headquarters at Khalishpur.

Litu, also a former ward commissioner played a key role in planning murder of Jessore Bureau chief of Dainik Janakantha Shamsur Rahman.

Lucky ruling party men!

Relief in flood free areas in Bogra, Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

They are not flood affected but got relief, allegedly because they are ruling party supporters.

Sources in district relief and rehabilitation offices in Bogra and Joypurhat said relief goods have already been distributed among a good number of people in flood free Khaloo, Adamdigi and Dupchancia upazilas in Bogra and Khetlal and Kalai upazilas in Joypurhat.

Their fake lists were prepared as per order of local BNP leaders, the sources alleged.

As per the lists, Joypurhat relief officials distributed over 210 tonnes of rice and Tk five lac 41 thousand including Tk 2

lac 8 thousand as house building grant in Joypurhat Sadar, Ketlal, Akkelpur and Kalia upazilas among. A total of 1,24,013 people were on the lists there, they claimed.

In Bogra, at least three tonnes of rice have been distributed among people in flood free Dupchancha, Adamdigi and Khaloo upazilas.

Another list of 530 people have been prepared for relief in two unions in Khaloo upazila.

According to official sources, about six lac 50 thousand people of more than 1 lac 34 thousand 190 families of the district have been affected seriously by flood in the two districts.



Minister for Jute and Textiles Shajahan Siraj distributing relief materials supplied by Neway Bangladesh (Pvt) Ltd to flood victims at Kalihati in Tangail on Friday (left) and dry food being supplied by Sylhet Lions Club at Joykolosh in Sunamganj Sadar (right).