

# Pre-monsoon floods in haor areas may cause food crisis by 2050

Say experts

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is likely to face a severe food crisis by 2050 as pre-monsoon flooding in the country's northeast haor areas might lead to a sharp fall in Boro output, according to experts.

"There will be frequent pre-monsoon flooding in haor areas because of shift in rainy season due to climate change, taking its toll on Boro output," Emaduddin Ahmed, a water expert and Executive Director of the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), told UNB.

He said waterlogging during April-June period, the high time for Boro cultivation, will become too common because of irregular and erratic heavy rainfall.

There are nearly 57 haors in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Netrakona and Kishoreganj districts, a northeast region of the country known for boro cultivation. But flash flood damages huge crops here during harvest every year.

Emaduddin said, "Even if the farmers cultivate boro crops in time, they won't be able to harvest their yields due to flash flood to be triggered by heavy rains and onrush of waters from hills."

He stressed the need for reconstruction of crop protection embankments in haor areas by raising their heights.

SM Shah Newaz, a flood management expert, said the rainfall will increase by 10-15 percent in the haor

areas for "global circulation", triggering flash flood. Citing the record of rainfall in Assam and Meghalaya, India, he said nearly 14,000 mm of rainfall are recorded at Cherrapunji in Meghalaya every year and it will increase in the future. "The rainwater from hills in India will also hit Bangladesh's haor areas before monsoon."

About the present condition of the haor protection embankments, he said the existing embankments are not enough to protect boro crops because the river water level in the areas will increase by 0.6 metre by 2050.

"The haor protection polders will be rebuilt raising their heights by 1 metre to save boro crops from rainwater," he said.

More worrying is that this haor region will become a permanent bowl of water as there will be no chance for the rainwater to run off due to rise in river water level, Shah Newaz said.

According to him, the polders will have to be reconstructed using modern technology apart from setting up pumps to pump out water to ensure smooth cultivation of boro crops.

"We know that a large amount of the country's food comes from the haor region. If we can't ensure proper boro cultivation in the haor areas, the country will face a severe food crisis by 2050," the flood management expert said.

A recent study by the IWM shows that the water level in the country's northeast haor areas during

pre-monsoon period will rise by 0.3 to 0.6 metre by 2050.

The water level in the Karchar Haor in Sunamganj will rise by 0.3 metre and in the Kawardighi Haor of Moulvibazar by 0.6 metre, according to the study.

The study recommended that the existing haor protection embankments will have to be raised by 1 to 1.5 metres to save paddy fields from flooding during the boro season.

The study also suggested reassessing and redesigning the flood embankments, including submersible embankments in the haor region.

It says that an integrated approach of river management covering dredging of the navigational routes and river bank protection along with feasible interventions can be undertaken to protect boro crops from the pre-monsoon flood.

Sources at the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) said the six districts have 367 kilometres of embankments to protect 46 haors from recurring floods.

Experts estimate that an amount of Tk 2,500 crore will be needed to implement a comprehensive project for remodelling the existing embankments to save boro crops in the six districts from flash floods.

Climate expert Dr Atiqur Rahman said the incidence of flood in Bangladesh has marked a rise by 20 percent in recent years due to climate change, dealing a blow to food grain production in the country's low-lying areas like haor.

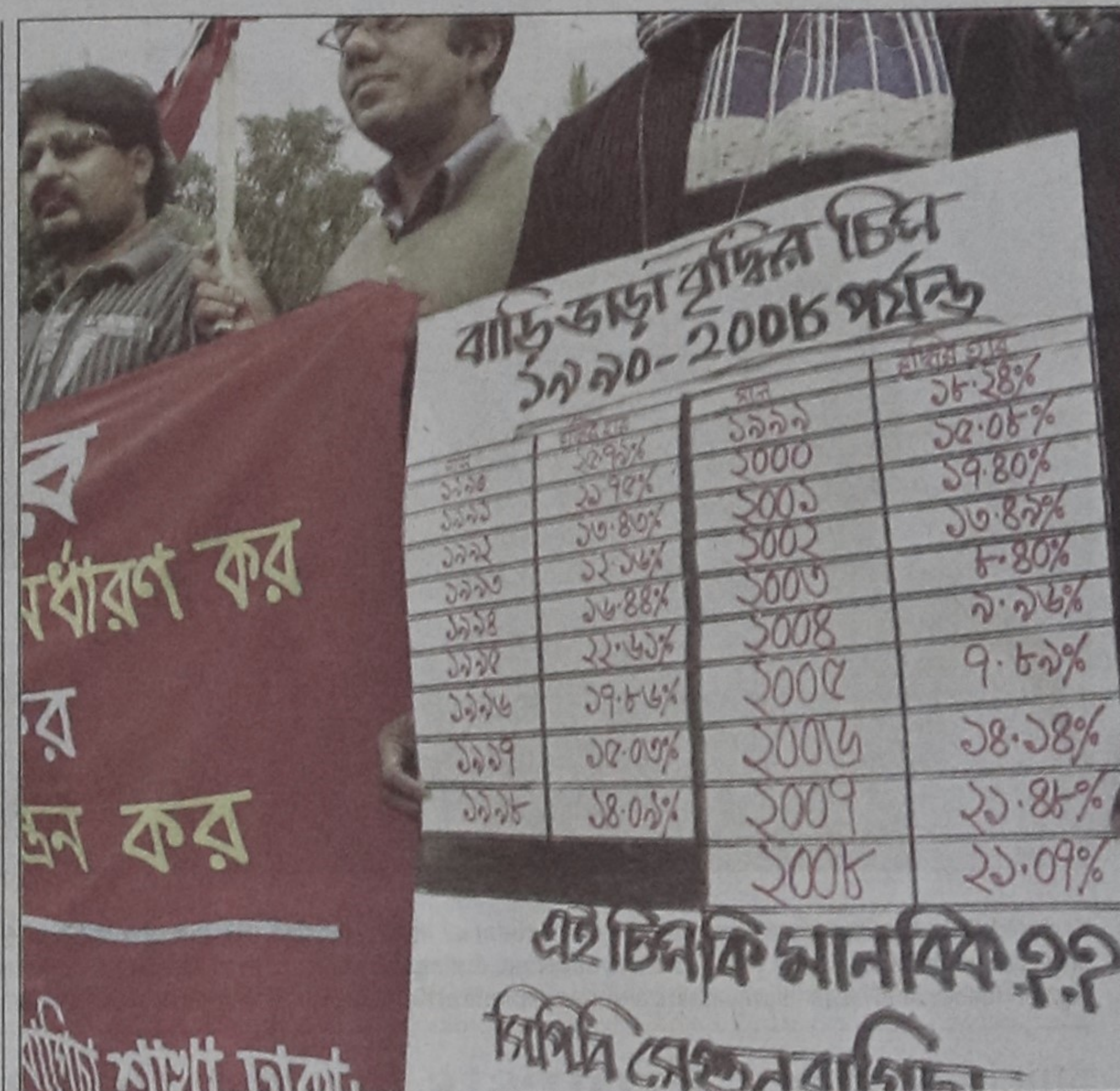


PHOTO: STAR

Communist Party of Bangladesh forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding steps to control house rent hike in the capital.

## Transport worker killed in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A transport worker was stabbed to death in the mid-town here in the early hours of yesterday and police arrested one person in this connection.

The deceased identified as Md Shahin, 30, son of Abul Hakim of Chak Shadupara village in Pabna, was a transport worker.

Police said the criminals chopped the victim in Pabna Telephone Exchange area around 6:00am when he was going to his workplace.

The miscreants stabbed Shahin mercilessly, leaving him dead on the spot.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Pabna General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

They arrested one Md Yahanir of the same village in connection with the incident.

Officer-in-Charge of Pabna Police Station Md Matir Rahman said a long-standing dispute over land might be the reason behind the murder.

## ILLEGAL LIQUOR IMPORT Manhunt for four people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Intelligence agencies have launched a manhunt for four people in connection with illegal import of liquor worth over Tk five crore through false declaration.

Two of them are importer Humayun Kabir of Media Enterprise and his clearing and forwarding agent Monir Hossain. The names of two others -- a former official of Khulna customs collectorate and the owner of a beauty parlour -- could not be known.

A consignment of huge quantity of French wine, whisky and champagne in two containers reached Mongla Port from Dubai recently. There were 23,592 bottles of foreign liquor in the containers.

The four people went into hiding soon after the two containers were opened at a jetty of the port on Tuesday evening.

Sources at the Mongla Port Authority (MPA) said General Manager of Media Enterprise Azad Mahtab carried a letter on December 21 to Mongla customs with some instructions from Customs Commissioner Md Nurul Islam regarding the consignment.

Customs Commissioner Nurul Islam was stand released from his Khulna office and transferred to Jessore on Wednesday following this incident.

However, no committee has been formed to probe this incident of duty evasion.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Gandaria Kisholoy Kochi Kanchar Mela take out a colourful procession on the occasion of Zainul-Quamrul International Children's Painting Competition-2009 in the city yesterday.

## Exclusive tourism zone in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban soon

UNB, Bandarban

An exclusive tourism zone would be built up in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar for increasing facilities to the tourists.

"Parliamentary standing committee on planning ministry has already sent a set of recommendations to the tourism ministry," Colonel (Retd) Oli Ahmed, chairman of the standing committee, told

reporters yesterday while visiting Bandarban to see the feasibility study of setting up of cable cars in the Chibuk hill, the main tourist attraction of the district.

Calling upon the private entrepreneurs for increasing investment in the tourism sector, he said the committee has already selected five tourist spots in Bandarban and Rangamati hill districts to

set up cable cars.

Oli said the government could earn huge revenue through utilising the beauty of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Standing Committee members Azizul Haque and Hamida Banu Shova, chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Hemayet Uddin Talukdar and Bandarban DC Mizanur Rahman were present on the occasion.

## 'Hold election to Muktijoddha Sangsad soon'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

District commanders of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad (BMS) on Thursday demanded the government hold the elections to the central, district and upazila commands of BMS immediately.

They also called for stopping verification of freedom fighters' list for now and resuming the task after holding the election.

"Nine months have already passed since formation of the ad hoc committee in February who was assigned to hold the election. Instead of holding the poll, the committee is doing other irrelevant tasks," said Kazi Ashraf Humayun, a commander of BMS, at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city.

"If the election schedule is not declared by December 31, we will submit a memorandum to the prime minister and seek her intervention," he warned.

"Even the committee is ignoring the instructions of the PM in holding the election within short time. The High Court in an order on December 6 also asked the authorities concerned to hold the election within 90 days. But the fact is that the committee is engaged in doing other works."

"We also demanded that anyone in the ad hoc committee would not be able to contest the election," said Ashraf, commander of Tangail district unit command.

Regarding the ongoing process of verifying the list, he said, "It should be done once the election was over. Otherwise, any freedom fighter deleted from the list might file a case which could hinder the election process."

Ashraf, on behalf of the district commanders, alleged that the ad hoc committee is misusing the BMS fund through distributing money to their favoured persons.

Abdur Rob, commander of Mymensingh district command unit, Abul Foyez Shanewaz, commander of Faridpur district unit, and Farhad Ali Mia, commander of Rajshahi district command unit, were present at the programme.

## Sugar cane crushing begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thakurgaon Sugar Mills, the largest sugar mill in the northern part of the country, started its production yesterday.

Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen inaugurated the operation as the chief guest for the current fiscal 2009-10 at a function on the mill premises.

Though the production was scheduled to be started from November 17 but failed due to shortage of sugar cane.

Managing Director (MD) of the mill Rafiqul Islam said the production target was fixed at 3,337 tonnes of sugar by crushing 47,000 tonnes of canes while the recovery rate from the canes is 7.1 percent.

The mill will be continued for 42 days during the current season.

The MD said the farmers have cultivated sugar cane in 5,492 acres of land this year against a target of 14,000 acres which was much lower than the previous year.

## Self-sufficiency in food by 2012

Says food minister

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will achieve self-sufficiency in food by 2012. To reach the target, the government has reduced the cost of fertilisers apart from giving subsidy on diesel," Razzaque added.

An adult needs 2000 kilocalorie per day, but 6.5 million people in the country do not get that from food consumption. Because, they cannot think of taking food considering its nutrition value, he also said.

The food minister said there are three parts of food security -- availability of food, purchasing capability of people and essential nutrition level in food.

"It's our goal to ensure self-sufficiency in food by 2012. To reach the target, the government has reduced the cost of fertilisers apart from giving subsidy on diesel," Razzaque added.

An adult needs 2000 kilocalorie per day, but 6.5 million people in the country do not get that from food consumption. Because, they cannot think of taking food considering its nutrition value, he also said.

The food minister said there are three parts of food security -- availability of food, purchasing capability of people and essential nutrition level in food.

"The government is

working on food security giving importance to these three factors," he added.

He also assured the researchers of providing all-out support.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Treasurer Prof Mijanur Rahman and Dean of biology faculty Prof Abul Bashar also spoke at the programme with Director of the institute Prof Sagormoy Barua in the chair.

Earlier in the morning, teachers and students of the institute brought out a colourful procession that paraded several streets on the campus.

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## One held for assaulting Satkhira SP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Police yesterday arrested one person who was allegedly involved in the attack on Superintendent of Police in Satkhira on December 9 at Norarchak in Debhata upazila in Satkhira.

The arrestee was Ali Hossain, 35, son of Monsur Ali Gazi of Norarchak village in Debhata.

Acting on a tip-off, police arrested him from Badartala bazar. When the police official went to visit a spot in Debhata on December 9, he came under attack by miscreants.