



PHOTO: STAR

With hopes of a good profit dashed by the whim of nature, a farmer gives a bleak look at his saline water affected watermelon field at Dakkhin Boalia village in Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali district on Sunday.

## Salty water damages melon on 700 acres

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Salty water from the Bay and adjoining rivers has damaged watermelon worth over Tk 35 lakh on around 700 acres of land in Galachipa, Baufal and Dashmina upazilas of Patuakhali district during the last few days.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district, watermelon on about 500 acres of land has been damaged fully and 200 more acres partly as tidal surges under the influence of new moon entered farmlands.

Even after receding of water from some areas, watermelon continued rotting due to the effect of salinity.

This season watermelon was cultivated on 2,800 acres of land in

Patuakhali district -- 1,000 acres in Galachipa upazila, 450 acres in Kalapara, 550 acres in Baufal, 600 acres in Dashmina, 100 acres in Sadar upazila, 60 acres in Mirzaganj and 40 acres in Dumki, said sources of DAE.

Visiting different areas of Galachipa upazila on Saturday, this correspondent saw many watermelon fields, especially those in low lying areas, still under water while farmers were desperately trying to save their fields from flooding.

"I cultivated watermelon on 45 acres of land with investment comprising a good amount of loan. I planned to sell the produce after 10/12 days with hope to earn a net profit of about Tk one lakh. But sudden tidal surge affected my fields for last three days. Now I can earn

only Tk 20 to 25 thousand," said Makbul Howlader, 50, a farmer of South Charkhali village under Galachipa upazila.

Abdus Salam Mollah, 40, Abul Hashem, 42, Bellal Howlader, Jalal Mollik, 50, Yeasin Howlader, 45, Ziaul Kabir, 42, Enus, 46, of Boalia village have similar stories to tell.

The affected farmers are now passing their time amid worry as most of them cultivated watermelon with loan from banks or NGOs, they said.

When contacted, DAE Deputy Director Nikhil Ronjon Mondol said, "We will prepare a damage list in the district and send it to higher authorities, recommending necessary steps in this regard."

## Tidal surge hits 4 upazilas of Khulna, Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tidal surges under the influence of full moon hit Paikgacha, Dumuria, Koira upazilas of Khulna and Mongla upazila of Bagerhat on Sunday.

Tidal water marooned over one lakh people while the surge damaged several embankments, dwelling houses, hundreds of shrimp enclosures and crops on vast lands in the affected areas.

The embankment at Boalia under Paikgachha upazila collapsed on Sunday morning due to pressure of tidal water from Kobadak River inundating the entire fishermen's colony at Hitampur village and rendering over 200 families homeless.

The surges have so far washed away over 300 shrimp enclosures as water level of the river continued to rise above danger mark.

Paikgachha bazaar has also been inundated, locals said.

In Dumuria upazila, over 10,000 people were marooned as strong tidal surges hit four villages of Shovna union on Sunday



PHOTO: STAR

A main road in Mongla town goes under water as tidal surge from the Bay overflows the adjacent Passur River. Large areas of a few coastal districts saw flooding due to the effect of new moon since Friday.

evening. The embankment constructed by the WDB last year collapsed due to pressure of water from the Ghengrial River which is still flowing above danger mark.

The tidal surges also washed away over 200 shrimp enclosures in four affected villages. The marooned people have taken shelter at different neighbouring 'safe' villages

and on highlands.

Shikaribari embankment under Koira upazila also collapsed at 2:00 pm on Sunday inundating six villages of Maheshwaripur union and rendering over 400 landless families homeless.

The surges washed away at least 200 shrimp enclosures and damaged crops on about 500 acres of land.

The embankment was constructed at a cost of Tk 6

crore 43 lakh on February 10 last.

In Mongla, entire areas under the municipality went under water from the Passur River. The tidal surges that began to hit coastal areas last Friday have affected over 50,000 people of Mongla township inundating most of the shops, roads and houses, local sources said.

## 20 injured as AL, BNP clash

Police sue 75 BNP men 'for attacking them'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 20 people, including four policemen, were injured as Awami League and BNP activists clashed at Shibpur under Puthia upazila on Sunday night amid Section 144.

Police fired some 14 shots and tear gas canisters to bring the situation under control and arrested 20 BNP activists from the spot, said Police Superintendent SM Rokon Uddin.

He said four policemen, Mamun, Javed and Sayeed--were injured during the clash. One of the injured cops was admitted to Rajshahi Police Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Police yesterday filed a case, accusing 75 BNP men of attacking them and obstructing their duty.

Rajshahi BNP president Nadim Mostafa claimed that 14 of their leaders and activists were injured. Of them, JCD Puthia municipality unit President Atikur Rahman and district Jubo Dal President Ariful Islam received bullet injuries, he said.

Local AL leaders claimed that two of their workers were injured as BNP attacked their meeting.

Police and witnesses said local administration imposed Section 144 at Shibpur of Puthia upazila from 3:00pm to 10:00pm as local units of both AL and BNP called meetings at a field at

Shibpur at the same venue same time.

When BNP men led by Nadim Mostafa were holding a memorial meeting on party secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain near Shibpur Mosque at around 7:00pm, AL activists swooped on them who also retaliated. AL activists damaged some 30 motorcycles of the BNP men during the clash.

Minutes later, police opened fire and dispersed the feuding groups. They picked up 20 BNP activists from the house of Jubo Dal leader Nazmul Huda.

The SP said BNP did not inform police before holding the meeting. Refuting the allegation, Nadim Mostafa said they duly informed the police.

## Khaleda's remarks on Santu Larma sparks protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Leaders and activists of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and its front organisations held a rally in the district town yesterday protesting the remarks made by opposition leader Khaleda Zia about Santu Larma and CHT peace accord.

They also urged the Speaker to expunge the 'slanderous' remarks from her speech delivered in the parliament on March 15 and submitted a memorandum to him (Speaker) through the deputy commissioner of Rangamati in this regard.

Chaired by Gumenbu Bikash Chakma, president of PCJSS district unit, the rally was addressed, among others, by Ushatan Talukder, vice-president of PCJSS central committee, Udayan Tripura, former president of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), and Nitol Chakma, secretary of

the student body. Terming her comments provocative, the speakers said Khaleda branded Santu Larma as a terrorist and said that he received training in India and killed thousands of Bangalee people and army personnel in hills. Her comments will make the nation confused about the ongoing agitation of the indigenous people, who are

demanding constitutional rights, and also thwart full implementation of CHT peace accord, the speakers said. As the leader of the opposition in parliament, Khaleda should play her due role in implementation of CHT peace accord, the speakers said, urging her not to make any false statements about PCJSS chief and the peace

deal. Though the indigenous people actively took part in the country's Liberation War in 1971, they are still deprived of their constitutional rights, the PCJSS leaders said. Hundreds of indigenous people from different areas of the district joined the rally and later paraded the main streets in a procession.



PHOTO: STAR

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity brought out a procession in Rangamati town yesterday protesting opposition leader Khaleda Zia's recent remarks on its leader Santu Larma and CHT peace accord.

### Arrest culprits of Jubo League within 72 hrs

Barisal polytec teachers give deadline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Polytechnic teachers here yesterday gave a 72-hour ultimatum to the authorities to arrest Jubo League cadres who assaulted two teachers on Sunday afternoon.

Mosharrif Hossain, principal of Barisal Govt Polytechnic Institute said, they held an emergency joint meeting of the institute's academic council, teachers, staffs and employees associations on Sunday night.

The meeting decided boycott of examination duties at the institute if police failed to arrest any accused within 72 hours, he said.

Jubo League cadres Mehedi, Nakib, Talon and Tota are the accused and investigation officer sub inspector Helal is trying his best to arrest them, said Zahangir Hossain, officer in charge of Kotwali police station.

Earlier two teachers of the polytechnic institute were assaulted on the campus on Sunday afternoon by the cadres of Bangladesh Jubo League, over capturing tender.

Sources said, a Tk 12 lakh tender was floated recently by the institute authorities for various development work.

Jubo League cadres became angry when the principal expressed his inability to give them the work ignoring the tender committee.

### Supporters of rival candidates clash, 20 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Supporters of two rival chairman candidates in the upcoming election to Kalikapur Union Parishad (UP) under Patuakhali Sadar upazila clashed on Saturday night, leaving at least 30 people from both sides injured.

Of the injured, chairman candidate Ataur Rahman alias Wazed Gazi, Nasir Khan, Mozammel Hossain, Bashir, Saleh Ahmed, Abdul Wahab, Zahidul Islam, Nur Mohammad, Shahid Khan, Jamal Hossain, Nazrul Islam, Shahid Khan, and Nazrul Islam were admitted to Patuakhali general Hospital and Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Locals said the supporters of two chairman candidates--Ataur Rahman alias Wazed Gazi and Tanvir Ahmed--attacked each other's election camp at Bashak Bazar at around 11:00pm.

### SUJAN DISCUSSION ON FAIR UP POLLS

## Steps needed to stop using financial, political muscle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Speakers at a view exchange meeting urged measures to stop use of black money and muscle power and ward off political influence to conduct the upcoming union parishad election in a free, fair and transparent way.

Sushashoner Janno Nagorik (Sujan) Barisal district unit organised the programme styled 'face-to-face with people' in Kulkati union under Nalcity upazila of Jhalakathi district on Sunday.

Kulkathi union Shujan president Shahjahan Mallik presided over the programme aimed at bridging the gap between local government election candidates and voters about electoral commitments and their implementation ahead of the upcoming union parishad election.

Among others, Sujan central Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, Barisal city unit acting President Akkas Hossain, Hunger Project Executive Director Tanzima Rahman Majumdar, and representatives from socio-cultural-professional and human rights organisations and election monitoring bodies participated in the discussion with the five chairman and 26 member candidates in that UP election.

"The authorities have failed to stop circulation of black money and use of muscle power and make the local government non-

political or non-partisan in the true sense," said Rafikul Islam Molla, a chairman candidate of that UP election.

"Such a situation is not conducive to a non-partisan, free, fair, transparent and acceptable local government election," said Shamsul Islam Mallik, another chairman candidate.

Union parishads are responsible for ensuring 10 basic rights and 38 supplementary rights of people, said participants at the programme.

Emphasising more empowerment for union parishad, the lowest tier in the local government institution, they called upon the voters to elect honest and competent candidates to strengthen democracy and help sustainable socio-economic development of the country and overall well-being of the nation.

Several voters reminded the candidates of their moral responsibility to go by the commitments they make to the electorate.

The participants appreciated Sujan for organising such programmes that will inspire and educate both voters and candidates to elect honest and competent candidates through a free and fair election.

At the end of the programme, the election candidates took oath and signed the declaration of the meeting to conduct a free, fair acceptable election.



PHOTO: STAR

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O Blake visiting the Benapole Immigration Check Post yesterday.

## Blake sees Benapole immigration process

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O Blake visited the Benapole Immigration Check Post yesterday to see the computerised immigration process carried out in the country's biggest land port.

Rafiqul Islam, additional deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, Khulna, received Blake when the later reached the port by road around 12 noon.

Blake is now on a four-day visit to Bangladesh. He met the prime minister, opposition leader and foreign secretary over the last two days and scheduled to address a

press briefing today in Dhaka.

Blake closely observed the computerised immigration process and online database entry of the passport passengers.

He also held a brief meeting with the officials involved in the immigration process.

Standing in the no-mans land, Blake also enquired about the import and export activities between Bangladesh and India.

## Police foils JCD human chain at RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

Police foiled a human chain formed by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Rajshahi University (RU) on Sunday.

Source said, leaders and activists of JCD university unit formed a human chain in front of the university Senate Bhaban in the morning to raise fund for helping JCD activist Ahasan Uzzaman alias Olin, a fourth year student of Material Science department who was severely stabbed by Chhatra League (BCL) men on February 8.

On information, law enforcers rushed to the campus and asked the JCD leaders and activists to stop the human chain. As the JCD men refused to do so, police forced them to leave the place.

Later, the JCD men held a protest rally in front of the university main gate on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway. At the rally, the JCD leaders blamed the university authorities and the law enforcers for foiling their programme.

RU unit JCD convener Arafat Reza Ashik told this correspondent that Ahasan needs around Tk 40 lakh for his treatment as he was critically injured on his chest, stomach and left hand.