



PHOTO: STAR
Farmers try to save whatever quantity of their watermelon they can from a field at Pakkhiya village in Patuakhali district as saline water from unusual tidal surges wreaked havoc to robi crops in the coastal areas since Sunday.

Tidal surges badly dent crops in Barisal region

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Saline water that entered Barisal region during tidal surges from Sunday to Tuesday caused extensive damage to seasonal crops on thousand of hectares of land.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Barisal said seasonal crops on 15,972 hectares of land in 11 districts under the DAE region went under saline water due to tidal surges during the three days, reports our Barisal correspondent.

Damaged crops include watermelon on 1,015 hectares, pepper on 3,530 hectares, different types of pulses on 8,478 hectares, til on 1,184 hectares, ground-nut on 127 hectares, vegetables on 452 hectares, sweet potato on 489 hectares, soybean on 210 hectares, corn on 48 hectares, sunflower on 19 hectares, chickpea on 145 hectares and other varieties of crops on 275 hectares of land.

Of the 11 districts under Barisal DAE, Patuakhali saw the most serious damage where crops on 7,445 hectares of land have already been destroyed.

Besides, crops on 2,862 hectares in Jhalakathi district, 2,711 hectares in Barisal, 2,227 hectares in Bhola district got damaged, said Shah Alam, additional director DAE in Barisal.

"The sudden rise in water level has been caused under the influence of full moon that is nearest to the earth in recent days. It may also be related with climate change after recent earthquakes and tsunami in Japan," said Mahfuzur Rahman, executive engineer of Bhola office of Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"Watermelon is cultivated in a large scale on the char areas and riverbanks of Charfession, Lalmohan, Manpura under

Bhola district and Baufal, Galachipa of Patuakhali district but the tidal surge affected it badly," said Ganesh Datta, a watermelon wholesaler in Barisal.

Our Patuakhali Correspondent adds: The district has become the worst affected due to the tidal surges that flooded the coastal areas from Sunday to Tuesday.

Robi crops on nearly 8,000 hectares of land in seven upazilas of Patuakhali district got damaged due to infiltration of saline water by recent tidal surges.

DAE sources said 1,66,283 hectares of land in the district was brought under robi cultivation. Local farmers cultivated different robi crops like watermelon, melon, sweet potato, chilli, lentil, kidney bean, ground nut, oil seeds including mustard in the area.

Mainly the lands outside flood control embankments were flooded by three to five feet tidal surge that damaged all kinds of robi crops, said AZM Momtazul Karim, deputy director (DD) of Patuakhali DAE.

Of damaged crops watermelon cultivated in large scale and watermelon cultivated on 8,188 hectares land in the district, he added. Tidal surge usually does not rise so high in this season but this time water level increased much higher than previous years, he said.

"We demand building flood control embankments in the area to save crops from tidal surge," Abu Bakar, 45, a farmer of Chaka Moina village under Kalapara upazila, who lost robi crops on four acres of land.

Like them, about 4,000 farmers including a good number of marginal farmers are now frustrated as their robi crops have been damaged by recent tidal surges in seven upazilas of the district.

Sand lifting threatens dykes

EAM ASADUZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Embankments of the main irrigation canal under Teesta irrigation project, the largest of the kind in the country, face the threat of collapse any time as a section of 'influential' people have continued lifting earth and sand from it.

If the embankments collapse, several thousand hectares of cultivable land and a number of adjoining villages in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas will go under water and irrigation to 44 thousand hectares of boro fields targeted this year will be threatened.

The 18 kilometre long and 278 feet wide main irrigation canal from Teesta barrage point at Dalia of Dimla upazila to Dundidari of Jaldhaka upazila has 1400-1600 cubic feet water per second flow if there is normal flow in Teesta River, said officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB).

Visiting the main canal area on March 18, this correspondent found that due to illegal earth and sand lifting, a number of ditches have appeared on embankments on both sides, each having 111 feet width. The situation is worse on the left embankment (at the eastern side of canal) as it is used by BWDB as observation road and light vehicles like tractors,



PHOTO: STAR

Like several other places, this portion of the 111-foot-wide embankment on the main canal under Teesta irrigation project in Nilphamari district remains highly vulnerable to collapse as unscrupulous earth lifters have created a large ditch only a few feet away from the bank at Paschim Balagram village in Jaldhaka upazila.

trolleys, mini trucks carrying earth and sand can move through it more easily.

At least at 20 points of the left embankment, 10-12 feet deep ditches stretching from 30 feet to 100 feet in length have been created, making it highly vulnerable. Most vulnerable points of this embankment are Paschim Balagram, Chaora Dangi and Dundibari of Jaldhaka, Kakra, Satjan, Khalisha Chapani and Dalia of Dimla.

In many places on the left embankment, there are

ditches within 10 feet from the main canal, making the areas vulnerable to collapse even under the normal pressure of canal water or in rainfall.

Earth and sand lifting and other activities that are harmful to canal embankments are treated as crime according to BWDB rule.

"Influential earth lifters from Jaldhaka use tractors and power tillers to lift earth and sand from the left embankment of the canal that flows through the village. They threatened me

when I protested the act," said Hafez Moinul Islam of Paschim Balagram village.

Zahed Ali, 40, of Dundibari village in Jaldhaka upazila, Mofizar Rahman, 35, of Kakra village in Dimla upazila, said some local people also join with earth and sand traders in lifting earth and sand from the left embankment to raise the level of their homesteads and for development of local markets.

Admitting illegal earth and sand lifting from the main canal embankments, Sub Divisional Engineer of

BWDB's Dalia Division Mainuddin Mondol said, "Last year I went to Paschim Balagram point of main canal to prevent earth lifting from left embankment as I was informed by mobile phone. But the earth lifters detained me. Later police from Jaldhaka rescued me."

Chairman of Balagram union parishad of Jaldhaka Tohidul Islam said, "In previous years main canal embankments at Satjan and Dundibari points were damaged, causing inundation to croplands and villages. BWDB had to spend a lot of money to repair them. If earth and sand lifting is not checked immediately, the embankments may collapse again."

"I am facing difficulties to look after vast network of Teesta canal embankments as there is acute manpower crisis at my office. A number of cases were filed against earth and sand lifters. I have sought help from the concerned union parishad chairmen for creating awareness among villagers," said Zahurul Islam, executive engineer of BWDB's Dalia Division.

When contacted, Abdul Khaleque, president of rock and sand traders association in Dimla, said he had no report of lifting earth or sand from Teesta canal embankments by any of their association member.

বিশ্ব যক্ষ্মা দিবস ২০১১
ঐক্যবদ্ধ প্রচেষ্টায় যক্ষ্মামুক্ত দেশ গড়ি

একনাগাড়ে ৩ সপ্তাহের বেশি কাশি
যক্ষ্মার প্রধান লক্ষণ

তাই অবহেলা না করে কফ পরীক্ষা করান
নিয়মিত পূর্ণ মেয়াদের চিকিৎসায় যক্ষ্মা সম্পূর্ণ ভাল হয়

আমরা এখন সুস্থ

বিনামূল্যে কফ পরীক্ষা ও চিকিৎসার জন্য যোগাযোগ করুন:

- উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স
- বক্ষব্যাধি ক্লিনিক
- নির্দিষ্ট এনজিও ক্লিনিক
- নগর স্বাস্থ্যকেন্দ্র
- মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল

জাতীয় যক্ষ্মা নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্মসূচি, স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবারকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়, ব্র্যাক ও তার সহযোগী সংস্থা কর্তৃক প্রচারিত



PHOTO: STAR
Class VI student Uttam Kumar Ghosh (middle) uses his two hands to write at the school examination and still makes good results through sheer will and perseverance.

Uttam breaks the barrier

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI,
Moulvibazar

Born with hands without any fingers, Uttam Kumar Ghose has to use his two hands to put pen on paper. But he has defied the challenge, getting first division and also scholarship in the Primary Terminal Examination 2010.

Now a student of Class VI, Uttam appeared in 2010 Primary Terminal Examination from Bazar Government Model Primary School in Moulvibazar town.

He is the second son of Buddhadeb Ghose, 43, a worker at a sweetmeat shop in Moulvibazar town, and Shila Rani Ghose, a housewife. With his scanty income, Buddhadeb maintains his family amid hardship.

Uttam has two brothers -- the elder one is a student of class nine at a local high school and the younger son is three-year-old.

"My son Uttam was born with disability. He has no fingers. But he wants to continue study. Teachers of Bazar Government

Primary School have provided all kinds of help to him," Buddhadeb said.

"Uttam is a brilliant student. He is one of the five students of my school who have got primary scholarship this year. He achieved it although he cannot write fast due to his physical challenge," said Md Abdul Basit, headmaster of Bazar Government Model Primary School.

The family requires financial help for smooth continuation of the kids' schooling, he added.

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International Mother Language Day
Mother's Day
Universal Children's Day
International Day of the Family
World Tuberculosis Day
International Day of Peace

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