

FREQUENT FLOODING BY TIDAL SURGES

Hapless Patuakhali people cry for a way out

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Frequent flooding by tidal surges, especially during the full moon and the new moon, causes untold sufferings to people of different areas in seven upazilas under the district.

Left without any repair for long, breached portions of protection embankments

adds to the situation.

A 1.5 km flood control embankment collapsed two years ago, making people of South Chandukhali, Katakali, Baniakathee and Pangashia villages in Itbaria union under Patuakhali Sadar upazila victim of regular flooding.

Cultivation of about 10,000 acres of agricultural land in the four villages is

badly affected as saline water floods the areas.

Schooling of about 2,000 students of four primary schools and a high school in the area is also hampered as the institutions are often closed due to flooding during high tides.

"We have to suspend the classes during high tide as water enters classrooms and academic activities are

greatly hampered for this reason, said Sonia Sultana, headmistress of Dakkhin Chandukhali Registered Primary School.

"Our school breaks up during high tide and we have to face great suffering as our schoolrooms and roads go under water, said Md Abbas Uddin, a class five student of the school.

"We cannot cook food

during high tide as tidal water enters most houses," said Rajia Sultana, a housewife of Chandukhali village.

Inundation by saline water, especially during the rainy season, hampers agriculture.

"We cannot cultivate our land in time due to flooding by saline water that enters through damaged parts of the embankment. And so, we are becoming poor day by day," said Abdul Jalil, a farmer.

Authorities should take early step to repair the embankments to protect us from tidal surges, said Samim Mia, local.

Mozammel Haque Jamaddar, chairman of Itbaria union parishad, said they sent several letters to the higher authorities concerned to take step for repair of the damaged parts of the flood control embankment but to no effect.

When contacted, Md Delwar Hossain, executive engineer for WDB (Water Development Board), said, "We already sent a proposal to the higher authority to repair the embankment and we are hopeful of repairing it by next year."

Meanwhile, over 300-foot area of a newly built flood control embankment in Gazir canal area of Lalua union under Kalapara upazila collapsed by tidal surge on Monday, locals said, adding that more 500-foot area is under threat.



PHOTO: STAR

Passengers coming to the central bus terminal in Rangpur town get frustrated as Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation started a 72-hour strike in eight northern districts yesterday morning.

Transport workers of Rangpur division on 72-hour strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Road communications between Rangpur division and other parts of the country remained suspended from yesterday morning as Transport Workers Federation went on a 72-hour strike to press home its 10-point demand.

Rangpur divisional unit of the federation enforced the strike in 8 districts, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

All motorised vehicles, including bus and truck, remained off all the 72 routes from the division from 6am yesterday.

Passengers went to different bus terminals to go to their destinations but failed to avail any bus anywhere.

Akter Hossain Badal, President of Rangpur divisional unit of Transport Workers Federation, told this correspondent that they were compelled to call the strike as the administration did not meet their demands within the stipulated time.

He said, earlier Rangpur divisional unit of

Motor Sramik Federation called the strike on May 29 to press home its 10-point demand, including a ban on human-haulers like Nasimon, Karimon and Bhutbhuti and battery-run auto-rickshaw on highways.

The demands of the federation also included withdrawal of 'false' cases filed against Rangpur District Transport Workers Union General Secretary MA Majid and removal of illegal markets from the highways.

It also demanded a hike in wages of transport workers and providing appointment letters and an end to various irregularities, including illegal toll collection by highway police.

He said that the federation gave an ultimatum to meet the demands by May 4.

"But the administration unfortunately failed to meet our demands within the deadline," he said.

The local administration held two inconclusive meetings with the leaders of the transport workers on Sunday and Monday which followed yesterday's indefinite strike



PHOTO: STAR

Along with the surrounding areas, Dakkhin Chandukhali Registered Primary School at Chandukhali village in Itbaria union under Patuakhali Sadar upazila regularly gets flooded by high tide, especially during the full moon and the new moon. A 1.5 kilometre embankment meant for protection of four villages in the area collapsed two years ago.

A bad day for school kids

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Students from deferent primary and high schools in the district suffered a lot as they had to wait for about four hours to greet a local lawmaker who was scheduled to inaugurate a rally as chief guest yesterday.

The district administration and environment office jointly organised the rally and a discussion to observe the World Environment Day.

Sources at the district administration and environment office said local lawmaker Zahid Maleque Swapan was scheduled to open the programme at

9:00am on the premises of Manikganj Government Boys' High School. But he reached there around 12:45pm.

Earlier the students, their teachers, officials and representatives from deferent government and non-government organisations gathered at the venue around 8:45am to take part in the rally.

Nasir Uddin, father of a Class Four student at a government primary school, said "We send our children to the school for taking lesson. The teachers are supposed to take care of them".

"However, it is really painful to see that they

compel the children to wait for hours for someone under the open sky amid hot weather."

Seeking anonymity, several other guardians expressed similar views and regretted the matter.

Teachers of different schools said that the district administration asked them to attend the function and ensure the presence of students.

Contacted, lawmaker Zahid Maleque said he was told that the programme will begin at 11:00am, not 9:00am.

He, also, expressed sorrow for the sufferings of the participants and being late at the function.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of different schools were brought to the playground of Manikganj Government High School yesterday to greet a local lawmaker. The kids had to suffer a lot amid scorching heat as their guest arrived at the venue four hours behind schedule.

3 drown in Sirajganj

Three kids missing as trawler sinks in Noakhali

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Three people, including two children, drowned in Tarash and Kazipur upazilas of the district on Monday.

Rakib Ahmed, 4, son of Albaz Hossain and Nova Islam, 4, son of Hafiz Ali drowned in a pond when they went to take bath at Vadas village of Tarash upazila on Monday noon, reports our correspondent.

After an hour of hectic search locals recovered the bodies from the pond.

In another incident, an NGO worker died and 12 people were injured as a boat capsized in the Jamuna river at Tarakandi in Kazipur upazila in the morning.

The deceased was identified as Shoeyba Akther Rozy, 38, wife of Milon of Dhanbandi Mohalla of the district town and a worker of CARE.

In Noakhali, at least three children feared drowned as a trawler carrying a bridal party capsized due to heavy tide in Azmar canal of Hatiya upazila yesterday afternoon.

The missing children were identified as Rani Jolodas, 6, daughter of Ranjit Jolodas, Raton Jolodas, 5, son of Harikrishna Jolodas and Ratul Jolodas, 2, son of Bibhash Jolodas. They all hailed from Char Amanullah of Hatiya upazila, reports our correspondent.

TRANSPORT STRIKE

Litchi growers, traders incur loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Transport of popular summer fruit litchi from the district has remained suspended due to an unscheduled 72-hour-long transport strike starting yesterday morning.

Wholesalers and gardeners of Dinajpur fruit market said they incurred losses of about Tk 1.5 crore on the first day of the transport strike that was enforced in eight northern districts following a meeting of transport leaders in Rangpur on Monday evening.

Large quantities of litchi on trucks and buses are transported to different places of the country and it serves as a major earning source for a large number of people in Dinajpur, a district famous for high quality tasty varieties of the summer fruit.

The district assumes a festive look during the plucking season of litchi as the gardeners, traders and litchi lovers throng the area.

But during a visit to the local market on Tuesday, this correspondent saw a different scene as there were hardly any buyers from other districts although the local market remained flooded with litchi.

Due to absence of buyers from other districts following the sudden transport strike, the traders were selling their litchi for throwaway prices.

"I sold Bombay litchi at Tk 220 per hundred pieces on



PHOTO: STAR

Litchi traders at Dinajpur markets had to sell the fruit at throwaway prices for lack of buyers yesterday because of the transport strike in Rangpur division.

Monday, today [Tuesday] I am selling it at Tk 70," said Md Mohidul Islam of Dinajpur litchi market.

China-3 and Bedana, two other popular varieties of litchi, sold for Tk 350 to Tk 500 per hundred on Monday but the prices dropped to Tk 150-200 yesterday, local traders said.

"I would not pluck the litchi if I had any idea about the transport strike. I sold China-3 litchi at Tk 500 for per 100 pieces yesterday, the same litchi I am selling at Tk

200 today," said Md Aslam Mia, a gardener of Dewandih village of Biral upazila in Dinajpur.

Md Monir Hossain, a wholesaler of local fruit market, said the transport strike cost Tk 1.5 crore loss to the litchi traders of Dinajpur yesterday.

Inter-district parcel service from Dinajpur has also remained suspended due to the strike, much to the inconvenience of people willing to send things, especially high quality Dinajpur varieties of litchi

for their relatives and acquaintances in other districts.

"I purchased 500 litchis from the local market this morning for sending to my relatives living in Dhaka, but I could not send it, as the courier service providers declined to book it," said Anwarul Islam.

Fazle Rabbi, general secretary of Dinajpur Transport Workers Union, said the 72-hour long transport strike that started yesterday morning will

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Three outlaws arrested in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police and Rab arrested three outlaws and recovered firearms from them in Rajbari and Meherpur early Monday.

In Rajbari, a team from Sadar police station led by sub-inspector Abdur Rafiq raided rail gate area at about 1:30am and arrested Chandan Kumar Biswas alias Chadu with a pistol and two bullets.

Police said Chandan is a cadre of an

outlawed party. In Meherpur, Rapid Action Battalion-6 in Gangni upazila, led by Lt. Sazzad Raihan, raided Muhammadpur village at about 2:30am.

The team arrested Ruhul Amin and Ratan Ali and recovered a shutter gun from their possession.

Rab said both are members of outlawed Lal Pataka, a faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML).

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