

# The Daily Star

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## **Satkhira struck badly**

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Apprehending that rough weather might turn worse, 35-year-old Ataur Rahman was having early lunch at 12noon with his 60-year-old mother Fatima Khatun at her house in Patakhali village in Satkhira. Halfway through the lunch, they noticed water was rushing in the house and ran for safety immediately.

Patakhali along with around a dozen more villages in number 11 Padmapukur union under Shyamnagar upazila, situated between the Kapotakkha and Kholpetua rivers, was swept by a four to five feet high tide since noon, said witnesses over phone.

The old Wapda dam that was protecting these villages since the 60's has been heavily damaged during Cyclone Aila.

All of these villages remained under water till filing of this report at 9:00 last night, although water level receded by one to two feet. The water was salty, the witnesses said.

Ataur and thousand others became homeless as 80 percent of the houses in these villages were built with mud. There are at least 1,500 houses in Patakhali alone.

"During the day we saw tin roofs of many thatched houses. By the evening those roofs crumbled down," said Ataur over phone from his safe refuge in the two-storey Patakhali Aminia Fazil Madrasa.

This madrasa provided shelter to around 2,000 people of the village.

Many people initially took refuge above their tin roofs. But as the tide water did not recede as was initially expected, they moved to safer locations on boats.

"There is no food or drinking water for any of us here," said Ataur, who works in Dhaka as a videographer and was visiting his village to see his mother.

"This is the beginning of the season for shrimp farming. Farmers have harvested paddy and brought them home. The shrimp farms have been totally flooded and the paddy stacked at home has gone under the high tide waters," he informed.

Though cattle or goat farming in these villages is not emphasised, there had been a lot of poultry, which has been swept away by the tide.

"In my 35 years of life, I have never seen such a disaster in this village. There was a major cyclone around this area back in 1988. Even then nothing of this sort occurred," he pointed out.

Haziruddin Gazi, a 95-year-old homoeopath of the village, reinforced this observation while talking to The Daily Star over the phone. "I have never seen such a disaster in this village in my entire life."

Gazi added, "I harvested 90 maunds of paddy and all of it is now under water. But it's not just me alone who incurred such a loss. All of us faced the same."

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