

Catastrophic Bangladesh floods kill over 50 people

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16 July 2026

Catastrophic floods and landslides, which began around July 6 and intensified over the following week, have killed at least 54 people in Bangladesh. More than one million people in over 600,000 households have been impacted across seven districts, according to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief's update of July 14. The death toll is expected to rise further as floodwaters recede and damage assessments reach remote areas.

Bangladesh, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, is experiencing increasingly severe monsoon flooding as global warming intensifies rainfall across its river delta. Scientists report that extreme rainfall events in northeastern Bangladesh have quadrupled since 1950, and a powerful 2026 El Niño has further disrupted monsoon patterns.

According to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the affected districts span the southeastern zone—Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, and Rangamati—and the northeastern districts of Moulvibazar and Habiganj. As of July 13, over 155,000 households remained marooned across 59 upazilas (sub-districts). Cox's Bazar has recorded the highest death toll, with 31 fatalities, followed by Chattogram with 13.

The toll on children has been harrowing. Three-year-old Miraz and eight-year-old Md Ashik drowned in floodwaters in Banshkhali upazila. Twelve-year-old Hasnatul Jannat Jharna was swept away while crossing floodwaters by boat in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar. In the Rohingya refugee camps, seven students and a teacher were killed when a landslide buried their Islamic study centre—victims as young as seven and eight years old were dragged from the mud by frantic rescuers. Earlier in the month, eight Rohingya refugees, including five children, were killed in landslides at the camps, a toll that barely registered in the international media.

More than 1.2 million Rohingya—survivors of the 2017 Myanmar military genocide—live in Cox's Bazar in makeshift shelters of bamboo and tarpaulin on steep, deforested hillsides. They are among the most defenceless and oppressed people in the entire region.

The Bangladesh state has warehoused these stateless people in a coastal disaster zone. Their shelters, built on unstable slopes stripped of trees long ago, collapse at the first serious

monsoon.

The humanitarian crisis is most acute in Satkania upazila in Chattogram, where 70 to 80 percent of the area remains submerged and approximately 350,000 people are trapped. The Satkania Upazila Nirbahi Officer Khondaker Mahmudul Hasan described the situation as “horrific,” acknowledging that major government facilities—including the health complex, courts, and police station—are themselves under water.

In Cox's Bazar, at least 150 villages across all ten upazilas have been flooded, leaving more than 300,000 people stranded. In Habiganj, around 30,000 people in 30 villages were marooned after the Khowai River embankment was breached. Across the Chattogram region, an estimated 14,300 hectares of cropland have been damaged, while nearly 10,000 commercial fish ponds and shrimp enclosures have been destroyed.

A farmer named Ahmad Hossain saw months of preparation and Aman seedbeds planted with 50 kilograms of paddy seed washed away in hours. A pharmacy owner in Satkania named Abul Kalam Azad lost medicines stocked with a Grameen Bank loan taken just weeks earlier: “I don't know how I will repay the loan,” he told the *Daily Star*.

Amid growing mass frustration and anger, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government deployed hundreds of military and Border Guard personnel across 11 districts for rescue and flood relief operations. Yet the relief has been woefully inadequate. The *Business Standard* reported that in Chattogram, where 750,000 people were affected, the government allocated a mere Tk 85,00000 (\$US69,268) in cash relief—barely Tk 11.6 per person per day. Eight days into the disaster, 80 percent of affected families in the worst-hit areas had received no government assistance.

As floodwaters begin to recede, thousands of survivors are returning to homes reduced to ruins, with food supplies, livestock and personal belongings swept away.

The disaster has sharply increased the risk of public health crises, including waterborne diseases such as cholera and mosquito-borne diseases like dengue. Speaking to Channel News Asia on July 14, Sonaskhi Dey, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Bangladesh program director, said more than 10,700 water and sanitation facilities had been damaged. She noted that difficult

terrain was hampering access to affected communities.

The floods have struck amid an ongoing measles outbreak that has killed nearly 750 children since March, while dengue has claimed 32 lives and infected 9,676 people as of July 16. Without urgent public health intervention, many more poor Bangladeshis face serious illness and death.

The disaster is the latest in a recurring cycle of destruction. In August 2024, flash floods struck many of the same southeastern and northeastern districts, killing at least 13 people and affecting nearly 4.4 million. Successive climate disasters between May and September 2024 impacted around 18 million people. In July 2025, the same regions were inundated again, with Feni recording 440 mm of rainfall in a single day.

It would be misleading to treat these floods as merely an act of nature. The death and destruction are the product of decades of capitalist development that has left Bangladesh's workers and rural poor completely vulnerable and unprepared. Their lives and livelihoods are subordinated to the profit interests of local landowners and wealthy businessmen.

Residents in Cox's Bazar have alleged that commercial fish and shrimp enclosure owners deliberately kept sluice gates shut, preventing floodwater from draining into the Bay of Bengal. According to Bangladesh Water Development Board officials, influential enclosure owners exercised control over the sluice gates to protect their investments while hundreds of thousands of ordinary people drowned. Illegal embankments built by land grabbers further restricted natural water flows.

In the capital, Dhaka, the two city corporations spent more than Tk 2.62 billion between 2021 and 2024 on drains and culverts. Yet on July 12, more than 100 millimetres of rain inundated large parts of the capital, paralysing the city.

According to the *Daily Star*, several ponds earmarked as drainage points had been filled in and handed over to real estate developers. In the Kallyanpur retention zone, originally covering more than 200 acres, only 30 to 35 acres remain after decades of encroachment. Key recommendations of the 2015 Drainage Master Plan were simply never implemented, highlighting that the government prioritises profit interests over the life-and-death questions facing workers and poor people in the country.

Deforestation to make way for agriculture and quarrying has massively intensified flood impacts. Many poor families are forced to live in deforested flood zones because they have nowhere else to go.

The BNP government, installed in February 2026 after a sham election conducted under massive military deployment, has rapidly jettisoned its election promises to improve living standards. As the WSWS has documented, the Rahman government is ruthlessly implementing the austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund, slashing government spending while inflation remains at 9 to 10 percent annually and real wages fall. The same government that cannot maintain functional drainage in Dhaka or protect embankments in

Satkania is fully capable of deploying 900,000 security personnel to oversee an election and suppress strikes by garment workers.

Anger has erupted among students over the government's indifference after Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations proceeded despite waist-deep flooding that prevented thousands from being able to attend. An audio recording has gone viral of Education Minister Dr ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon dismissively comparing students to "farm chickens." Thousands of students joined protests in Dhaka on July 14, demanding the postponement of exams until after the floods and the minister's resignation.

While the wealthy are largely insulated from the effects of such disasters, studies show that poor rural women spend up to 30 percent of their household budget protecting themselves from floods. A 2025 report found that 92 percent of internal migrants—many displaced by climate disasters—experienced at least one form of modern slavery after moving to urban labour markets.

Bangladesh's export-oriented garment industry, producing for major Western brands, concentrates millions of workers in low-paid, insecure jobs in flood-prone cities, with wages too low to permit meaningful protection or recovery. Every climate disaster drives more people off the land and into exploitation.

The same failures recur every monsoon: breached embankments, inadequate drainage, delayed relief, and infrastructure designed to serve commercial interests rather than human need, leaving the Rohingya, poor peasants and slum dwellers to bear the greatest cost.

There is no national solution to the increasingly severe disasters, which are the outcome of global climate change driven by carbon emissions from a small number of powerful corporations. What is urgently needed is a coordinated global response to rapidly reduce emissions and mobilise resources internationally. This in turn requires the ending of the capitalist profit system and the reorganization of society along socialist lines.



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