

Hasina blames govt

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Replying to a question Sheikh Hasina said the BNP government should have resigned much earlier for its failure to tackle the post-cyclone situation. She said the Government did not respond to the need of the hour. The Government has totally failed to protect the national property due to sheer indifference, she said adding that it did not pay heed to the appeal of the Opposition to involve all the parties and form a national committee to face the situation.

Sheikh Hasina demanded short and long-term plans to prevent loss of lives and property due to devastating cyclones in future.

She said the government was doing politics with the relief activities and so it did not form an all-party relief committee, as was proposed by the Opposition, to coordinate the relief operations.

She told a questioner that the Acting President as head of the state could form an all-party relief committee at the beginning of the situation. But BNP was opposed to involving all opposition parties in the relief operations, she said.

She said, in Chittagong the BNP workers were given the responsibility of distributing relief materials and thus they got an opportunity to misappropriate relief goods.

The Awami League chief said, shortage of relief goods, mismanagement, politicisation of the relief activities and lack of coordination in distribution of relief goods had shaken the confidence of the people in the government.

She said, during her visit to the affected people of Halishahar, Talpara, Majpara, Bakalia, Kattali, Anwara, Barsatgram, Boalia, Chunnapara, Wahed Ali Chowdhury Hat, Banskhal, Cox's Bazar, Kutubdia, Moheshkhali and Badarkhali

alleged that supply of relief goods was scanty and they were not getting food, medicine, drinking water and clothes.

Suggesting short-term measures she said the affected people should immediately be provided with medicines besides foodstuff and clothes.

She said, the Government should immediately take measures to arrange boats and other transports to reach relief materials to the distressed people. She also demanded exemption of all agricultural loans, adequate support for rehabilitation of shrimp cultivators and salt growers and financial assistance for fishermen.

She said, efforts should be made to repair all damaged mills and factories and reactivate the Chittagong Port on an emergency basis. She also demanded immediate construction of embankment, damaged roads, schools, colleges, orphanages, and madrasahs and afforestation.

Sheikh Hasina said the cyclone and tidal bore had destroyed crops, sea ports, naval and air bases, aircraft and naval frigates, satellite station and industries. But after the disaster the government has totally failed to tackle the situation, she alleged and regretted that it was trying to give an impression that everything was going well, through publicity and propaganda over Radio and Television.

She said Awami League was continuing relief activities at their own initiative and opened gruel kitchens in different affected areas. She also suggested for opening of gruel kitchens for the affected people at the government initiative.

She told a questioner that parliament should continue its session with occasional breaks because many issues concerning the disaster would be discussed in the House.



Body of a baby, a victim of the catastrophic cyclone and tidal bore was found hanging from a tree even after seven days on Sunday at Anwara upazila, a severely battered coastal area of Chittagong. — Photo: Nurul Alam

Infrastructures

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power and telephone lines.

The ministry sources said, of the affected districts, 66 upazilas, Chittagong City Corporation and four municipalities were badly hit. All types of physical infrastructures such as roads, bridges, culverts, educational institutions, upazila parishad buildings, health facilities, residential quarters, union parishad buildings, tubewells and other utility services suffered colossal damages.

To facilitate restoration of normal life in the cyclone affected areas, the sources said, a massive rehabilitation programme (RP) involving all the sectors of development was required. Such an RP will require huge resources and considerable time for implementation. The experts have split this RP into two phases: Short-term and medium/long-term. The short-term phase will include those activities which will help bring the affected people back to normal life quickly. Under the long-term programme, the RP may aid at further development of facilities for the people of the affected areas.

The ministry sources said, the short-term rural infrastructure RP will involve a total cost of Taka 108.70 crore and the medium/long-term RP, a total of Taka 275.65 crore.

The short-term rehabilitation programme (RP) for water supply and sanitation involves a total cost of Taka 28.51 crore while the medium/long-term RP will account for a total cost of Taka 4.38 crore.

The ministry sources said, the local government division of the ministry will oversee the implementation of the rehabilitation programmes.

The LGEB will implement both the short-term and the medium/long-term RPs concerning rural infrastructures in collaboration with upazila parishads, pourashavas and city corporations.

The ministry said the short-term and the medium/long-term RPs concerning water supply and sanitation would be implemented by the Department of Public Health Engineering.



Sandwip: A worried father with his diarrhoea patient daughter. —Star photo

Moulvibazar

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ing the area at any moment.

Six relief centres were opened in the town for flood-affected people. About 3,000 people have taken shelter there. Government relief did not reach the centre and the people there were living without food, it is learnt.

UNB adds: Road communication of Moulvibazar with Sylhet district headquarters was disrupted Friday. Zakiganj remained cut off from the district headquarters since Wednesday as the Zakiganj-Sylhet road went under two feet water.

Water gushing through 17 breaches of the embankment submerged most areas of Moulvibazar, Kanaighat and Goainghat upazilas.

Although 50 per cent of crops were harvested, the remaining crops on 90,000 acres went under water and 2,000 kutcha houses were damaged, totally or partially, sources said.

Standing crops on 35,000 acres have gone under water in Moulvibazar district, officials said.

"We are trying to protect the town by dropping sand bags in breaches of the embankment", DC Moulvibazar said.

Comilla

The flood situation in Comilla district is taking a turn for the worse with rivers

Gumti and Meghna continuing to rise.

The Gumti is flowing two feet above danger level at Companyganj point, district officials said Friday.

Two breaches have occurred on the old embankment of the Gumti which flooded eight unions in Muradnagar upazila, submerging jute and paddy lands. However, 70 per cent of paddy crops were harvested earlier, the officials said.

The rising Meghna seriously affected one union in Daudkandi upazila, they said.

US, Swedish

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International Airport Friday morning.

Director of Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) Torben V Petersen received the consignment at the airport which included 4,600 plastic tarpaulins and 10 lakh packets of oral saline.

Three more consignments from Norway and Denmark are due shortly.

An Australian Jumbo jet carrying 45-50 tons of relief goods will reach here on May 14.

The cargo will include high protein biscuits, drugs and other essential items for CARE now undertaking relief activities in the affected areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Relief distribution

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properly.

She gave on the spot decision to authorities concerned to expedite relief operation when ever necessary.

The Prime Minister also distributed relief materials including dry food, sarees, lungis, medicines and water purifying tablets.

Begum Zia during her tour addressed a number of spontaneous gathering and called upon the people to face the calamities with courage and fortitude. She told the affected people that her government would stand by them and that all available resources would be utilised for their rehabilitation.

The Prime Minister directed concerned officials and BNP leaders to see that no affected people were deprived of relief materials. She said no irregularities would be tolerated in distribution of relief goods.

Although her stay in Chittagong, Begum Zia toured affected places of the port city and its suburbs every afternoon after her day-long visits to the affected coastal areas and islands.

The Prime Minister visited the areas to see the restoration of power and water supplies and other civic amenities there. Begum Zia was apprised of the overall situation of the essential agencies like Power Development Board, Chittagong, WASA and T and T Department. She was told officials and employees of these agencies were working round the clock to restore essential services and that water and power supplies and telephone connections in the city were being restored to pre-cyclone level.

The Prime Minister directed officials of the essential agencies to restore full normalcy in their functioning both in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar as soon as possible and asked them to procure necessary materials and engage extra labourers on emergency basis for the purpose. Begum Khaleda Zia also asked the concerned officials to temporarily shift their head offices to Chittagong, if necessary, to facilitate speedy disposal of all matters.

A number of ministers are regularly visiting cyclone ravaged Chittagong to supervise relief and rehabilitation activities by giving on the spot decision in their respective fields.

Begum Zia sanctioned an additional amount of 50 tons of rice and Taka five lakh for reconstruction of dwellings and educational institutions at Rangamati district.

Temporary shifting

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Department and other concerned offices to stay at Chittagong to facilitate rehabilitation on an urgent basis.

The cabinet meetings were attended by Communications Minister Col (retd) Oli Ahmed, State Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Textiles M.A. Mannan, State Minister Livestock Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Textiles M.A. Mannan, State Minister for Jute Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and others.

During her stay in Chittagong Begum Zia personally supervised relief operations and rehabilitation work of the damaged infrastructures.

Prime Minister's Secretariat sources said, by now 80 per cent of the electric lines had been restored and Prime Minister herself took care of the relief operation which is now being carried out by the Armed Forces, social workers, administration and other government departments.

Begum Zia also held a meeting of the Relief Coordination Committee with the local MPs and the members of the administration. She gave instruction to continue relief work at all affected upazilas under the supervision of a state minister in each upazila. The local MPs and upazila leaders should also be involved in the relief activities, she said.

CPB wants national body on rehabilitation

Secretary General of Communist Party of Bangladesh, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik Friday called upon the government to form a national committee immediately to tide over the havoc wrought by the recent cyclone in country's southern region, reports BSS.

"I call upon the highest office of the government to unite Army, Navy, Air Force, political parties, social forces, student bodies, cultural bodies and professional groups under one banner and engage in this challenging task of rehabilitating our afflicted brethren," the CPB Secretary General said.

Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, who returned from a visit to Kutubdia and other affected areas under Chittagong district, was addressing a press conference at the party office in Dhaka. CPB leaders Ajoy Roy, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Nazrul Islam Bulbul and Moshed Ali were present.

Manik said the government alone could not handle such a colossal task. The BNP government had failed to arrest the post-cyclone deterioration effectively and its "going alone" policy would amount to sheer irresponsibility, he added.

The government led by BNP is the product of an all-out movement against autocracy but BNP is now not complying with the national call for an apex level committee comprising all concerned for handling the crisis," he said.

He also called upon the government to adjourn Jatiya Sangsad and send all members of Parliament to cyclone affected areas to stand by the survivors.

Manik said the government could have closed all medical colleges and mobilise all doctors and medical students alongwith nurses to serve humanity in areas destroyed by the killer cyclone and tidal surge.

Speaking about the destruction he saw in the areas visited, the CPB Secretary General said 45,000 to 55,000 people out of the total population of 1,10,000 in Kutubdia island were killed by the cyclone and tidal surge which together left nothing for the survivors but miles of desolate land.

Quoting the survivors, Manik said the Kutubdia embankment needed immediate repair under test relief programme which would give a double benefit.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said, "We do not question the efficiency of the government but we want direct participation of all in this great task which is not possible on the part of the government alone."

Mrs Fanfani assures all help for reconstruction

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The Midnight File

Iraq-Kuwait border demilitarised

KUWAIT CITY, May 10: United Nations peacekeepers Friday formally declared the Iraq-Kuwait border a demilitarised zone. However, there have been confrontations reported between Iraqi civilians in the border town of Safwan, where some people support and others oppose President Saddam Hussein. A spokesman for the UN mission, told reporters that the nine-mile (15-kilometer) wide buffer zone established in the aftermath of Gulf war was calm and there are no reports of violations, reports AP.

Armenians kill Soviet soldier

ARTZVASHEN (USSR), May 10: Armenian militants attacked Soviet Interior Ministry troops in Azerbaijan with machine guns and grenades Friday, killing one soldier and wounding eight, Soviet media reported. The Azerbaijan press agency Asa-irada said the attack took place at dawn on a road between the villages of Kehne Qishlak and Tatli in Akstafa province, about 3 kilometers (1.5 miles) from the Armenian border. Radio Russia said 14 troops were traveling in two military trucks when they were ambushed, reports AP.

Two Albanian soldiers flee

BELGRADE, May 10: Two armed Albanian soldiers have fled to Yugoslavia across snowcapped Mt Prokletije, the state news agency Tanjug reported Friday. It did not identify the soldiers but said they were brought to the police station in Plav, a town in the republic of Montenegro Thursday, the newspaper Politika said, reports AP.

No medical team in first 9 days

From S Bari

CHITTAGONG, May 10: Gangrene and diarrhoea have claimed several hundred cyclone survivors in the past week, according to inhabitants of nearby islands. On the island of Koriardia, till Tuesday, people had not seen any medical personnel since the tidal wave.

Open wounds fester in the damp, with no available medication. All the children under the age of six had severe diarrhoea, with cold sores and bruises still raw.

Medical teams had not been in any of the following islands visited by this correspondent: Koriardia, Sonadia, Matarbari, Magnama. It was obvious that local residents needed not only medicine and doctors, but basic medical advice. Dead bodies contaminate drinking water, and wounds remain unwashed. The few coconuts which remain are not used, though they were found to contain enough juice to feed children suffering from diarrhoea.

A European medical worker, who asked not to be identified, told this correspondent that helicopter flight two days after the storm refused to take him to the islands, in favour of a journalist. He also added that eight hundred kilograms of medicine flown in from the west were held up in customs for three days. He pointed out that this inefficiency or lack of co-operation will greatly hamper relief operation leading to increased deaths in the cyclone affected area.

Will for survival

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outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases in the offshore islands where corpses and carcasses litter throughout the island. These could not be buried as yet. The district administration has intensified their efforts to bury the dead and recover the floating bodies.

On Friday, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia returned from the affected areas after a four-day stay in Chittagong. She made frequent visits to the affected zones and herself supervised the relief distribution work.

Finance Minister Saffur Rahman made an announcement in Chittagong that reconstruction of the coastal embankment around the Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Chittagong Airport and naval base, washed away by the cyclone, would start soon.

Meanwhile, Japan has decided to provide Bangladesh an emergency grant assistance of 7.5 million US dollars for post-cyclone relief operation and rehabilitation.

A US cargo aircraft measuring the length of a football field touched down at Zia International Airport on Friday afternoon. It carried a huge quantity of relief materials for the cyclone victims of the country. It brought medicines, containers and medical equipment.

Another plane from Sweden with 34 tons of relief goods worth about Taka 40 lakh arrived at Zia International Airport on Friday morning. A Swedish donor agency Diakon has donated Taka 60 lakh in aid of the cyclone victims. Three more consignments from Norway and Denmark are due shortly.

An Australian Jumbo jet carrying about 50 tons of relief goods will reach Bangladesh on May 14. The cargo will include protein biscuit, drugs and other essential items for CARE-undertaking relief activities in the affected areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

China will give emergency relief materials worth two million US dollars which include food, medicine, tents and other daily necessities.

Sirajganj tornado toll rises to 16: 17 missing

SIRAJGANJ, May 10: The death toll in Thursday's cyclonic storm rose to 16 with three more deaths reported Friday, says UNB.

Officials, however, confirmed five deaths.

The two victims struck to death by lightning during the storm were identified as Selim Mollah (27) and Selim Paramanik (30) of Randhuni village of Belkuchi upazila. The other victim Bijoy Krishna Saha (45) of Jholagathi village under Rayganj upazila succumbed to his injuries this morning.

Officials and villagers said the storm that ravaged Kazipur, Rayganj, Belkuchi, Kamarkhand and Sadar upazilas with a windspeed of 150 KPH affected more than 10,000 families. At least 5,000 families were also rendered shelterless.

Fifty people admitted to Kazipur and Sadar hospitals are still in critical condition while another 80 were released after first aid, hospital sources said.

Local people said five of the 17 people who were reported missing after a boat capsized in the midstream of the Jamuna, seven miles off Sirajganj, still remained untraced.

Meanwhile, thirty-nine answer scripts of the ongoing SSC examination were reportedly missing from Hatmabala Girls High School damaged by the storm.

The worst-battered areas were: Kazipur, Dhekuria Hat, Matbari, Sonamukhi, Shuvagacha villages of Kazipur upazila, Bahargola, Mujib Sarak.

Khokshabari, Hossainpur, Darjipara and Malshapara of Sadar upazila, and Randhuni and Charmatjhal of Belkuchi upazila.

Local people alleged government relief goods have not yet reached affected areas. Some BNP workers distributed flattened rice and molasses among the affected people in Malshapara, Hossainpur, Darjipara and Bahargola villages.

District Relief Officer said that the administration has allocated seven tons of wheat for Sirajganj municipality, Sadar and Kazipur upazilas. The allotment will be despatched tomorrow as officers were closed today, he added.

Secretary of the Sirajganj unit of Red Crescent Society said its volunteers started relief operation in the storm-battered areas. But local people said the volunteers were yet to reach the affected areas.

The Ministry of Relief today sanctioned 50 tons of biscuits, 250 pieces of saree, 250 pieces of lungi and Tk 2.50 lakh as relief for the tornado-hit people of the district.

9 more planes arrive with relief

By Staff Correspondent

Nine more aircraft loaded with relief materials including food-stuff, clothes and medicine from different countries touched the Zia International Airport till 8 pm Friday. Three planes flew in from USA, two from India and one each from China, Denmark, Germany and Italy.