Cyclone victims given early warning for 3 days: Khaleda

Death toll in affected areas enormous: Hasina

foodstuff, medicines and pota-

ble water to the cyclone af-

fected areas. Narrating per-

sonal experience from his visit

to some of the affected areas in

Chittagong, Moheskhali, Cha-

karia and Banshkhali, he said

hundreds of people there were

living under the open sky.

Steps should be taken on an

emergency basis for the

procurement of sea trucks,

speed boats and helicopters

for gearing up relief operation

also be made for the supply of

tents to the people now living

cholera and diarrhoea would

break out in an epidemic form

if the decomposed bodies and

carcasses were not removed

and disposed of immediately.

The urgent need for the hour

is dry food, medicines and

He suggested the formation

of an all-party relief committee

at the national level to conduct

relief operation on a sound

footing. United efforts were

needed by all irrespective of

party affiliations to face the

grave situation caused by the

Chowdhury (NDP-Chittagong)

said hundreds of affected peo-

clone-hit areas from the want

pearing in an English weekly

news magazine which quoted a

senior military officer as saying

that the supply of relief mate-

rials and foodstuff to the af-

fected areas was too inade-

people of Chittagong very

much expected that the Prime

Minister would shift her gov-

ernment there to conduct re-

lief operations. In this connec-

tion he pointed out that the

people of Chittagong district

elected Begum Zia as a mem-

ber of the Jatiya Sangsad from

one of the constituencies of

over inadequacy of relief in the

affected areas, he said people

in many parts of Chakaria,

Kutubdia, Anwara and many

nearby regions have been suf-

fering from the lack of drink

ing water. Even the inhabi-

tants of Chittagong city were

out of potable water and elec-

to seek helicopters, speed

boats and sea trucks from the

neighbouring countries to ex-

pedite relief operations. He

suggested instituting a parlia-

mentary committee and acti

vating the disaster manage-

ment committee to cope with

the situation created by the

M A Jinnah

Jinnah (BNP-Chittagong) said

the allegation made by the

Leader of the Opposition that

the government measures

were not adequate was not

true Communications Minister

Oli Ahmed and State Minister

for Environment and Forest

and Fisheries Abdullah Al

Noman along with local MPs

and political leaders were

working relentlessly in

Chittagong to mitigate the suf-

ferings of the affected people,

Prof Waliullah

(AL-Noakhali-6) taking the

floor, gave a pathetic picture of

the cyclone affected areas of

Hatiya and said no relief mate-

rial excepting some bread was

reached to the islanders. He

said if relief materials were not

rushed immediately, hundreds

of people would die out of star-

Zainul Abedeen Faruq

Noakhali-1) said the disaster

should be faced unitedly.

Regarding the statement of

Waliullah, he said the district

officials of Noakhali went to

the Hatiya with succour. He

hoped that the government

would be able to overcome the

Taking the floor, Rashed

Khan Menon expressed sympa-

thy to the members of the be-

reaved families. Welcoming the

said, "we are ready to cooper-

ate with the government in

national committee compris-

ing members of the political

parties, army forces and na-

tional NGOs headed by the

Acting President or the Prime

Minister. He also stressed the

need for taking an emergency

agricultural rehabilitation pro-

Menon said endeavours

Menon called for forming a

facing the disaster".

call of the Prime Minister, he

Zainul Abedeen Faruq (BNP-

Prof Mohammad Waliullah

Taking the floor, M A

He urged the government

Expressing his concern

this district.

tricity, he said.

natural calamity.

he stated.

affected people.

Mr Chowdhury said, the

He referred to a report ap-

.ple were suffering in the cy-

of food, medicines and water.

Mr Salahuddin Quader

natural calamity

drinking water, he stressed.

under the open sky, he said.

Special arrangement should

Maulana Nizami warned that

in the cyclone-hit areas.

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its session Friday afternoon at 3-24 after a break of three days due to the cyclonic storm with the Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas in the Chair, reports BSS.

The proceedings of the House began with the recitation from the holy Quran.



Just after the recitation the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia quickly stood up and sought permission from the Chair to move a resolution condoling the deaths of thousands of people in the catastrophic cyclonic storm that hit the coastal areas of the country.

After having received the nod from the Chair Begum Khaleda Zia said the loss of life and damage and destruction to property was extensive and colossal in the cyclonic storm.

She said the government took adequate measures to alert the people in the affected areas. She said the people were given early warning about the impending danger of the cyclone for three days through radio and television.

Begum Khaleda Zia said although the number of deaths was low because of the early warning, still thousands of people died in the disaster and the loss to property including homesteads, crops and other things was widespread.

She said the Chittagong Port became inoperative and the Chittagong Airport started functioning after remaining inoperative for two days.

She said food, water and other necessary things were being sent to the distressed and marooned people. She said people were also being

evacuated. The Leader of the House said the communication system in the cyclone-hit areas including the Chittagong city area became completely shattered. She said efforts were being made to fix the communication net-work.

She said the damage and destruction was so colossal that it was not possible on the part of the government to face the situation alone.

She said army, navy and Air Force, BDR, police and other voluntary organisations were carrying out relief and rescue operation in the affected areas.

She said bodies were now being washed back from the sea. She said it was not possible to face a situation of this magnitude alone.

She said "I have already given a call to the people." She called upon all to work together to face this calamitous

situation in the country. She said the government had declared Saturday as the National Mourning Day. She said the national flag will fly at half-mast on Saturday. She said special prayer was offered in all mosques of country seeking divine blessings to face the situation and for salvation of those who lost their lives in the cyclonic storm. Prayers were also offered in pagodas and churches.

She then urged the chair for the acceptance of the condolence resolution and proposed for offering prayers (doa) by standing to seek salvation for the departed souls.



Sheikh Hasina

Taking the floor, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina quoted from newspapers and said as many as three lakh people might have been killed

by the disaster unfortunately. she said, the government had not come out with any clear picture about the number of

The Leader of the Opposition said relicfs had not reached many places and consequently, those who had survived the onslaught, were slowly reaching towards death. She said it was true that radio and television had given warnings about the impending danger but no substantial preparations were made for their

Sheikh Hasina said the death toll in the calamity was enormous and added that this could have been minimised had there been more precautionary measures.

The Leader of the Opposition proposed a fulldress discussions on the various aspects of the disaster after the condolence resolution was adopted and prayers offered for the dead. She proposed adjournment of all scheduled order of the day to enable discussions on the cy-

After the statement of the Leader of the Opposition, several other members from the opposition bench wanted to take the floor.

The Leader of House Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia again took the floor and said that it was not true that reliefs had not reached the affected people.

She said none died due to starvation after the disaster although relief operations were handicapped by manifold problems. Helicopters were essential for relief works under this situation and shortage of choppers was being terribly felt in carrying out rescue operations, the Prime Minister

Begum Zia said the severity of the catastrophic cyclone was wellknown to all and government did whatever possible under these conditions. The severity of this disaster surpassed previous catastrophies,

The Leader of the House said the government sought to tackle the situation to the best of its ability and none should be under illusion that the cyclone could have been faced in a better manner and added that this government tackled the onslaught much better than previous authorities.

Begum Zia said one must talk rationally - one must not talk just for the sake of talking. It was not possible to have an idea of the real condition only by reading some newspapers and an overview from the helicopters. "We have gone to the sites and seen the situation ourselves and are taking all possible measures to face a calamity of such magnitude", the Prime Minister said.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina sought permission of the chair and said that it had been observed from the speech of the Leader of the House that it was impossible to go to the affected areas without helicopters.

Sheikh Hasina said, she herself along-with the Speaker and some ministers had visited the cyclone-hit areas and saw the extent of damage. "We are ready to work to mitigate the sufferings of the distressed people", she said, adding, "but we did not get any cooperation

from the government." She said the extent of damage could not be ascertained till now. She said, since the Leader of the House had given a statement the members should be allowed to take part

in the discussion. Sheikh Hasina wanted to know how many countries had come forward with help for the distressed people of Bangladesh. "Is there not a single country who had supported us with helicopters so that we could carry on relief operations", she asked.

She asked whether Bangladesh had lost credibility as none was coming with any



Salauddin Qader

Invited by the Speaker to make his observations Mr Salauddin Qader Chowdhury suggested that the members should be allowed to take part in the discussion on the condolence resolution.

He said the government

could be benefitted if the suggestions of the opposition members were accepted.

Mr Salauddin Qader Chowdhury (NDP-Chittagong) expressed his firm believe that if the members in the Opposition and Treasury Bench worked unitedly the challenge could be overcome.



Tofael Ahmed

Participating next, Mr Tofael Ahmed (Al-Bhola) suggested that the House today should discuss only the statement given by the Prime Minister.

He said he was present in the affected areas and saw the distressed people there. "They did not allow me to leave but I assured them that I would discuss their plight in the Jatiya Sangsad," he added.



Rashed Khan Menon

Mr Rashed Khan Menon (WP-Bakerganj) said the matter was a serious one referring to the Prime Minister's address to the nation on Thursday, he said it was a national crisis.

He said a decision in the House through discussion could benefit the distressed



Suranjit Sengupta

Taking the floor Ganatantree Party member Mr Suranjit Sengupta said the cyclone was a national catastrophe and therefore it should be faced unitedly. He stressed, humanity must prevail upon party politics.

Mr Sengupta said though the Leader of the House had made a statement on the situation, yet it lacked the description of the overall situation. He called for bringing all parties and professional groups under one umbrella to face this grave situation.



Motiur Rahman Nizami

Jamaat-e-Islam leader in parliament Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami gave a brief account of the human misery caused by the devastating cyclone. He said he himself saw human bodies floating along with carcasses in Banshkhali

Mr Nizami said although it was agreed that the order of the day would be followed today, it should be proper to halt

other business and thoroughly discuss the cyclone, it being a national catastrophe. He said all concerned be given a chance to participate in the discussion.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas reminded the members of the consensus reached on how to conduct the business of the house. At this stage, Leader of the

House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia stood up and said since all of us had agreed on the passage of bills, "I would propose to allot one hour for discussion on the cyclone and its after effects." The Speaker announced

that there would be a discussion on the issue for an hour and asked opposition chief whip Mr Mohammad Nasim to ensure that the concerned members got chance to speak.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas then invited Baksal President Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed to take the floor and allocated him five minutes.



Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed said it was not possible on the part of the government to face such a catastrophic situation singlehandedly and appreciated the call of the Leader of the House asking cooperation from all But he asked how, when and where the modus of cooperation will be outlined and relief measures extended. Mr Ahmed called for forming an all-party committee to enable everybody to contribute their mite in the national effort.

As asked by the chair, Awami League member Mohi uddin (Bakerganj-4), alleged that opposition members were not provided with necessary facilities to visit the affected areas. He said, thousands of people who lost everything were awaiting relief. He further alleged that detailed news was not being circulated by the government.



Moudud Ahmed

Jatiya Party leader Barrister Moudud Ahmed said that the condolence resolution on the cyclone victims moved by the Prime Minister should be recorded in the proceedings separately.

He stressed the need for intensifying relief operations in the extensive coastal belt and off shore islands like Char Jabbar and Hatiya where relief materials were yet to reach. He said, it has not been possible for anybody to reach many of the cyclone battered places in Noakhali district "I don't blame anybody for it because it is a reality," he added.

Mr Moudud Ahmed said Bangladesh is victim of the international environmental deterioration. All-out steps should be taken right now to save our country from this situation with the assistance and cooperation of rich countries of the world. He said, adding, that the summit of G-7 held in Paris and the World Bank sponsored conference of the donor countries held in London elaborately discussed the environmental hazards in Bangladesh.

He called for taking concrete steps for improving the environmental situation in Bangladesh and assured all-out cooperation of his party in this respect in national interest. He also suggested formation of a permanent all-party co-ordination committee at the national level to face any eventuality caused by natural calamities from time to time.

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami urged the government to identify the factors responsible for the deterioration of environment in Bangladesh. He made a passionate plea

should be made at the international level for scientific and technological cooperation for a for rushing relief materials, permanent solution to cyclone

related problems and checking environmental disaster.

The House was adjourned at 5 pm for 20 minutes for the Asr prayer. The House resumed after

the Asr prayer with the Speaker in the chair.

M A Mannan

Taking the floor, State Minister for Textiles Major (Retd) M A Mannan, said he had gone to the affected areas of Noakhalt, Fent and Luximpur districts with other members of Parliament and saw to it that relief reached the needy.

He said 450 tonnes of wheat, 450 tonnes of rice and Tk 30 lakh in cash had been sent to each of these districts.

The Minister said there should not be any alarm about relief operations in Hatiya because 30 tonnes of "chira" and "gur" had been despatched and the Deputy Commissioner, Noakhali was still there to coordinate relief activities.

However, Mannan said relief goods might not be adequate considering the needs but added that the authorities were making every possible effort to meet the situation.

Tofael Ahmed

Speaking next, Mr. Tofael Ahmed (AL-Bhola) said a great national calamity had befallen the country and it was time that all worked in concert to face the situation.

He said he had witnessed the 1970 cyclone but the severity of the current disaster surpassed everything.

Quoting newspapers, the opposition member said, woes of the affected people knew no bounds and all should devote themselves to mitigate their sufferings.

Mr. Ahmed said he would have been happy if a National Relief Committee could be formed to coordinate the relief operations. He criticised the Relief Minister for saying that the government would seek in ternational assistance only after assessing the magnitude of the disaster.

The opposition member welcomed Prime Minister Begum Zia's appeal for international assistance because the situation warranted such aid However, he found no efforts to involve all-waiving political lines - in relief efforts. Mr. Ahmed recalled that the

President of the erstwhile Pakistan had come to cyclone affected areas in 1970 14 days after the occurrence. Continuing Mr. Tofae

Ahmed suggested that an All Party Relief Committee headed by the Acting President be set up to coordinate relief operations since that would involve all in the massive task.

The opposition member wondered why the Acting President had not gone to the

affected areas. He said a high-powered committee headed by the Acting President would be a step in the right direction at this hour and would also carry greater weightage to interna tional world. Mr. Ahmed demanded that

the affected areas be declared as "distressed area" and called for extending immediately Agricultural and House Building loans to the people there.

He said adequate relief be Jinnah called upon all to rushed to the affected areas work unitedly for the cyclone because his experience said the relief handed out so far

was too scanty. Mr. Ahmed suggested that the House be adjourned so that the Members of Parliament could go back to the affected areas and carry out relief activities. He said it was not the wish of the opposition that the government should fail in such a situation because it was an elected government that had come through a mass movement." We want everything to go in right direction in such a national calamity", he said.

Selina Rahman

Selina Rahman (BNP-Barisal-Barguna-Pirojpur (Women) said the local administration was trying their best to do whatever was possible on their part. She said Members of Parliament A.S.M Firoz, K.M Jahangir, Nurul Islam Moni and Dhirendra Debanath Shambhu would corroborate her statement who were with her during the visit to the affected areas.

She said it was an uphill task to remedy the colossal damage and destruction wrought by the cyclone.

Taking the floor, Shajahan Siraj (JSD-S Tangail) said the frightful cyclonic storm that hit the southern districts of the country was unprecedented in history. He said it was not an easy task to determine the death toll of the disaster so soon.

Mr Straj said it would be no surprise if 10 lakh people were killed in the catastrophe. He said it was now necessary to keep the survivors alive by reaching them the required

Mr Siraj proposed the formation of an All-Party Parliamentary Relief Committee with the Prime Minister at the head to face the situation. He also proposed contribution of their one month's honorarium to the Relief Fund.



He said, "where are our friends, can't India sent 10 helicopters at this hour of our need? "He hoped friendly countries like the USA, USSR, Japan, China and Germany would come forward to our

He said it would be very difficult to determine the number of deaths in the storm so long as the waters remained on the calamity-stricken areas.

Shahjahan Omar Mr Shahjahan Omar (BNP Jhalakathi) said the number of deaths could be more if the Leader of the House would not have taken measures for giving early warnings about the danger of the disaster.

Mr Shahjahan Omar proposed the formation of a task force to face, the Green House effect threatening to submerge a part of the southern Bangladesh on a long term ba-

Mr Suranjit Sengupta said the calamity could be faced on a national scale if the Prime Minister considered it necessary. In that case, we all would have to be united on this issue. He said it was not possible on the part of the government to face this problem alone.

He said the problem would have to be identified as a humanitarian one, keeping it above politics. He said the need of the hour was to stand by the side of the survivors.

He said it was now upto the Prime Minister how she would face the situation. He said the problem could be faced either along with the Members of Parliament and even along with those outside it. He said the Prime Minister could do the job even keeping the opposition outside, if she would think so.

Sheikh Hasina

Taking the floor at this stage, the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina urged the Chair to allow the Parliament Members from the affected areas, Mr Dhirendra Debnath Shambhu, Nurul Islam Moni and Hafizuddin Ahmed to speak so that they could give a detailed account of the deaths, damage and destruction in the cyclone affected areas.

Mr Dhirendra Debnath Shambhu (AL-Barguna) said although the number of deaths in his area was low, the damage and destruction to property and crops was extensive. He said the relief materials and cash that reached his area was too meagre to meet the needs of the distressed people. He proposed exemption of arrear Agricultural Loans and taxes and called for sanctioning new loans to the farmers. He also called for declaring the cyclone affected areas as "a

calamity zone". Participating in the discussion, independent member Maj (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed proposed that the affected farmers be given interest free agricultural and house building loans. He said Army Engineering Corp could be engaged to construct houses quickly.

Mr Hafizuddin alleged that even after four days of the disaster, no government officials visited Lalmohan affected in the cyclone. He called for taking appropriate measures so that Parliament members could contribute in relief activities.

Mr Nurul Islam Mont (Ind-Borguna) said although the loss of life in his constituency was negligible, damage to property and crop was enormous demanding immediate action from the government. He said if food, shelter and drinking water were not provided immediately, those who have survived the catastrophe, would not live.

Mr Moni said since the opinion of the House was that the cyclone was a national issue, it should be addressed unitedly. If we fail to meet the urgent needs of the people, we would not be spared. He also called for making an united call to the work asking for assistance and at the same time

demanded that strict vigilance be observed that relief materials were properly distributed.

Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas then invited the Leader of the Opposition to address the House.

Taking the floor, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hastna said it was true that the people were forewarned of the impending danger, alleged that adequate measures were not taken to save life and property. She pointed out that destruction of eight helicopters, 40 aircraft and two naval vessels amply demonstrated that precautionary measures were not

Sheikh Hasina said that food, drinking water and relief materials have not reached many affected areas and questioned the claim of the government that relief reached all places and to all those who needed assistance. She called for taking necessary steps to save those who had survived the catastrophe.

Sheikh Hasina alleged that government have totally failed to reach relief to the affected people. She said bodies were floating along with carcasses and in many places there was no arrangement for burial.

The Leader of the Opposition said 'we have extended our helping hand, but alleged that 'there is no mentality to accept it.

Referring to foreign assistance, Sheikh Hasina alleged it seemed that there was hardly any response. It seemed that we are friendless and helpless", she alleged.

Sheikh Hasina said what was needed now was to unite all the efforts of the government, and non-government agencies well as those of the armed forces to take up relief

The Leader of the Opposition said since many affected places were difficult to reach, helicopters and naval vessels be employed for relief activities. She said besides reaching food, clothings and building materialise, arrangements should also be made to ensure supply of drinking water either by sinking tubewells or supplying water purifying tablets. She said paratroopers of Bangladesh Airforce could also be engaged in rescuing

people and reaching relief. Sheikh Hasina alleged that stagnated saline water in many areas was creating health hazards. She said unless such water was drained out immediately epidemics would be broken out. She demanded urgent medical supplies to the af-

fected places. The Leader of the Opposition said we have no alternative but to live with this natural calamities. What we required were necessary measures to protect life and property, she added. She alleged that after the happenings of August 1975, not a single cyclone shelter was built and not an inch of embankment added to what were done by the government of Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. At this stage there were lot of commotion in the Treasury

Bench. Sheikh Hasina asked the government to make an appeal to the international community for assistance. She demanded of the government to declare the cyclone affected areas as "distress areas" so that assistance could be distributed in a better way. She also demanded allocation of farm and house building loans to the affected people.

The Leader of the Opposition concluded her speech with a call to the government to come forward with the reports of the actual situation in the affected areas. She vehemently criticised what she termed as a "cover up" of the actual situation.

She said we are not here to quarrel, but to cooperate with the government to save the suffering humanity. She offered total cooperation in relief ef-

forts. Sheikh Razzaque Ali The Speaker then ad-

journed the House for thirty minutes for Magreb prayer. The Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzaque Ali chaired the session after the Magreb prayer and invited Prime Minister and Leader of the House to

make her statement. Begum Zia said helicopters were carrying out relief operations in the cyclone-hit areas everyday to mitigate the sufferings of the affected people. She said due to inclement weather sometimes these helicopters could not fly.

She said her government would always stand by the distreased people. She said the cautionary measures taken by her government kept the death toll to a minimum.

(Incomplete)