

Armed forces

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Army relief activity in different cyclone-hit areas are also going on in the full swing.

About 60,000 chapatti, 200 kgs of sugar and a huge quantity of drinking water and medicine have been dispatched from Dhaka, Jessore, Comilla and Chittagong cantonments Friday. These were arranged by the army personnel from their own ration.

The number of army medical teams have also been increased to provide succour to the distressed people.

The Jessore Area Commander Major General R A M Gholam Mukhtar Friday visited Kalapara in Patuakhali, Dhachar and Char Fashon in Bhola and Pirojpur and distributed relief materials among the affected people. It may be mentioned here that it was for the first time Friday that any team could reach Dhachar since the cyclone and tidal bore on Monday night.

Jessore area troops so far distributed about 67,000 chapatti, 1062 kgs of rice, 1472 kgs of atta, 693 kgs of sugar, 280 kgs of pulses, 158 kgs of powdered milk, 30 kgs of edible oil, 174 kgs of salt, 121 kgs of tea, 200 Bananas, 250 kgs of kerosene oil, 650 match-boxes and 200 water purifying tablets from their own ration.

Jessore area troops also distributed 92,887 pieces of clothes including saree, lungi and other garments and 100 relief boxes received from the President's relief godown.

Moderate rainfall in city

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka city Friday experienced moderate rainfall accompanied by gusty wind.

Met Office recorded the velocity of wind at 56 kilometre per hour and rainfall at 28 millimetre in the city.

Rainfall ranging from 5 millimetres to 59 millimetres also occurred at different parts of the country on the day. The highest velocity of wind was recorded at 77 km in Bogra. The maximum rainfall was recorded at 59 mm in Comilla, Met Office said.

Rough weather prevailed in the city and other districts throughout the day Friday.

Rainfall in other districts recorded during 6 am to 9 pm Friday were: Srimongal-27 mm, Barisal-25 mm, Bogra-24 mm, Ishwardi-21 mm, Matjide Court-14 mm, Jessore-7 mm, Faridpur-7 mm, Sylhet-5 mm, and Tangail-1 mm.

Sonadia

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bags of 'cheera' weighing 100 kg and 4 gal-jerry cans. But this relief work was not systematic in any way. We simply flew around, and dropped bags wherever we thought necessary. There was no contact with anybody on the ground, no coordination with anybody. Those getting relief were simply lucky.

On the way back to Patenga, I, like many others, had no doubt helicopters could not really do the job, no matter how hard the Air Force boys worked. Boats, lots of them are the answer.

Indian copters likely to arrive today

NEW DELHI, May 3: High winds in the aftermath of the cyclone that scythed through Bangladesh this week have delayed the dispatch of three Indian Relief helicopters, the government said Friday, report AFP.

A government spokesman said India had hoped to dispatch the three military transport helicopters to assist relief and rescue work in Bangladesh Friday but winds were too high. He said he hoped they could be delivered Saturday.

New Delhi has also promised Dhaka 700,000 dollars worth of emergency relief materials including food, water purification tablets, medicines, bandages and clothing.

Hasina leaves for Ctg today

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka this morning for the cyclone affected areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, reports BSS.

She will be accompanied by party General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP and Abdul Jalil, party's joint secretary.

BFUJ, DUJ jt meet today

The President and the Secretary General of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Rezauddin Ahmed and Amanullah Kabir Friday called upon the journalists community to come forward to help the distressed people in the cyclone-affected areas, reports BSS.

In a statement, the BFUJ leaders asked the affiliated unions of the BFUJ to take necessary steps to this effect on emergency basis.

Meanwhile, an emergency joint meeting of the executive committees of the BFUJ and the DUJ will be held today (Saturday) at 10 am at the Jatiya Press Club.

Pak PM

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Sharif is expected to stay for a day.

Report from Calcutta says: Mother Teresa and Mayor of Calcutta Prasanta Banerjee today expressed their sympathy to the government and people of Bangladesh at the colossal damage to life and property caused by the cyclone and tidal surge that hit southern Bangladesh on Monday night.

They called on Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner Mahboob Alam here separately and conveyed their sympathy for the distressed humanity.

Mother Teresa told Alam that she was going to Bangladesh tomorrow to stand by the side of the distressed people.

Prasanta Banerjee, while conveying his deep sympathy on behalf of the people of Calcutta, said he would make appeal to the residents of Calcutta to extend help for the cyclone victims of Bangladesh.

US assistance

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were immediately turned over for relief efforts.

She said the initial relief was funded out of the 130 million dollars in development assistance and food aid which Washington gives annually to Bangladesh.

"We're reviewing what is available within these funds and what additional assistance we can give on an urgent basis," the spokesman said.

She said the US Embassy in Dhaka had determined that the supply of fresh drinking water was the greatest immediate need of cyclone survivors.

She said Bangladesh had requested helicopters from a number of other countries, including India, Pakistan, China and France.

"We're looking at ways to address this (helicopter) request, she noted although she added that the United States was currently stretched, because of requirements in the Gulf.

She pointed out that in the 20 years since the last major cyclone in Bangladesh, Washington had contributed three billion dollars to Dhaka in economic aid for disaster preparedness, food security, health and hygiene and agriculture development.

The cyclone left at least 92,294 dead, according to the latest official count.

France

Reuters reports from Paris, France said today it was sending an initial sum of 300,000 francs (50,000 dollars) in

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka will send relief supplies to cyclone-hit Bangladesh in consultation with the Dhaka government.

Pakistan

Pakistanis expected to provide three helicopters for use in the relief operation.

Japan

Japan has decided to provide Bangladesh with a total of 2.5 million US dollars in the form of grant and relief as emergency assistance.

The grant will be available in cash while the relief in the form of essential drugs, water purifying tablets etc, through the Japan International Co-operation Agency.

British government declared an assistance of 4.3 million US dollars for succour of the affected people.

UNICEF

UNICEF supply division in Copenhagen, Denmark.

A specially chartered plane will arrive May 5 carrying a consignment of 5 lakh pieces of water purification tablets, one lakh half-litre bottles of IV fluid and injecting sets and 200 rolls (10 tons) of tarpaulin reinforced polyethylene sheets for shelter.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide Bangladesh with 50,000 US dollars immediately for emergency relief requirements of the cyclone victims of the country.

The UNDP administration will also send a team to Bangladesh on urgent basis to assess the extent of damage caused by the cyclone and determine the additional assistance.

This was disclosed to Finance and Planning Minister M. Saifur Rahman when he met with the UNDP Administrator William H. Draper in New York Thursday.

UNICEF has released one million US dollars for emergency assistance to cyclone-hit Bangladesh, reports Agency.

Communicating this to the Prime Minister's office, the UN Children's Fund informed that its Executive Director James P. Grant will also be making an appeal for five million dollars more for UNICEF relief operations in Bangladesh.

To meet the immediate health and safe drinking water needs for children in the cyclone affected areas, UNICEF has procured 250,000 dollars worth of supplies from

ICRC

The International Red Cross on Friday issued a fresh appeal for 12 million Swiss francs (8.5 million dollars) to assist victims of the Bangladesh cyclone disaster.

The funds are to provide medical supplies, food, clothes and blankets for about 300,000 people.

Steve Davey, Under-secretary-General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said the cyclone was as strong as one in 1971 when at least half a million people lost their lives. Better preparedness, he said, saved many lives this time.

Pope John Paul II on Friday urged a "generous and effective" international relief effort for victims of the disastrous cyclone in Bangladesh.

The appeal was contained in a message to the archbishop of Dhaka, Monsignor Michael Rozario.

In the message, the Pope also expressed his condolences for the dead and his "sympathy and solidarity" with all the people of Bangladesh.

The third Saudi aircraft carrying relief materials from the kingdom arrived in Dhaka Friday, airport sources said.

Earlier, the first Saudi aircraft, a C-130 cargo plane, arrived in Dhaka last night with 155 pieces of tents.

The second one reached Dhaka early Friday morning with more relief materials for the distressed people in the southern belt of the country ravaged by a severe cyclone and accompanied tidal surge.

King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz ordered the shipment of the relief goods soon after learning the news of the havoc.

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Special prayer offered

Special prayer was offered at mosques, temples, churches and other places of worship all over the country for the peace of departed souls of those killed in the Monday night's cyclone and seeking divine blessing to save the country from calamities, reports BSS.

Responding to the call of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Muslims throughout the country offered munajat at mosques after the Juma prayer for the welfare of the people and the country. They invoked the divine blessing so that the cyclone battered people could bear the loss of their near and dear ones with courage and fortitude.

Capital gurbana janaza was held at the Baiful Mukarram National Mosque after the Juma prayer for the peace of the departed souls.

People urged to help cyclone victims

The government has appealed to all strata of society, to contribute in cash and kind like food, clothes, cooking pots and utensils to meet the immediate needs of the suffering people in the cyclone affected areas, reports BSS.

The appeal was made Thursday night at a meeting of the National Emergency Relief Coordination Committee held with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The relief goods may be handed over to the Deputy Commissioner's offices in all the districts from where those will be transported or air-lifted for distribution among the cyclone victims.

The Deputy Commissioners have been advised to receive the relief goods from the members of the public and the voluntary organisations in their respective districts and send them to the Zonal Relief Coordinators at Chittagong and Barisal or to the Air Movement Headquarters at Tejgaon Old Airport for airlifting to the affected areas.

Voluntary organisations or groups going to the affected areas for relief work have been advised to coordinate with the respective Deputy Commissioners or Upazila Nirbahi Officers.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia receiving donations to Prime Minister's Relief Fund for cyclone victims at her Sugandha office Friday. —PID photo



The body of a young girl, Anwara (10), was found near the embankment of Char Torab Ali in Noakhali two days after Monday's cyclone. Over 100 people reportedly died in the area. — Photo: Chapal Bashar

Cuellar assures all help

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portance of adequate food security, compensation of lost crop and immediate relief measures.

There would be need for considerable external assistance both for relief rehabilitation and restoration of the devastated infrastructures, Rahman added.

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PM rejects criticism

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calamities. BNP had organised relief activities on its own without awaiting government help she said adding it was question of sincerity.

Begum Zia said people did not have any control over natural disasters, and despite an elaborate preparedness since the loss of life and property was colossal. But who will take the responsibility for deaths of thousands of people due to man-made disaster in 1974, she asked amid strong protests from the Awami League members. Reacting to Sheikh Hasina's criticism of relief operations Begum Zia posed a question as to how relief goods sent from abroad were utilised in 1974.

She further said, immediately after independence relief materials worth crores of taka came to Bangladesh. Did the people get those relief materials, she wanted to know.

In this regard she quoted Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as saying "Where has my own blanket gone?"

Begum Zia said the Government would punish those who would neglect relief work. A high powered committee has been formed to strengthen relief activities. Opposition leaders and MPs will get all cooperation from the committee, she assured.

Blasting the Leader of the Opposition she said the government has sought help from friendly countries and was receiving favourable response. "We have not invite anybody to play the role of a master", she said amid shouts and counter-shouts between the Opposition and the Treasury benches.

She brushed aside the criticism that the government was hiding information and said assessment of the extent of damage was a time consuming process. She severely criticised the Leader of the Opposition for her remarks that relief operations remained confined to a publicity stunt.

Sheikh Hasina earlier said the government had failed to mitigate the sufferings of the cyclone affected people. She said it was true that the people were alerted, but alleged that adequate measures had not been taken to save people's life. Sheikh Hasina said five helicopters and 40 aircraft which were damaged at Chittagong airport could have been saved, had there been adequate preparedness.

The Leader of the Opposition said relief goods did not reach all areas. Relief goods distributed were inadequate. Bodies of people and cattle were floating side by

Emergency aid to help cyclone victims in Bangladesh.

"It is just the first phase until we can make more precise estimations of how to help," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

A plane carrying water purification chemicals would reach Bangladesh very soon.

UNICEF

UNICEF supply division in Copenhagen, Denmark.

A specially chartered plane will arrive May 5 carrying a consignment of 5 lakh pieces of water purification tablets, one lakh half-litre bottles of IV fluid and injecting sets and 200 rolls (10 tons) of tarpaulin reinforced polyethylene sheets for shelter.

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The Midnight File

Saifur meets US congressmen

WASHINGTON, May 3: Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman, who is now on a visit to Washington met Congressman La Garce, Chairman of the house agricultural committee, Darle Passell, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs committee, Stephen Solars, Chairman of the Subcommittee of Asia and Pacific Affairs of the House foreign affairs committee, Jim Moody, Tony P Hall and IMF Managing Director M Camdessus yesterday and appraised them of loss of life and property caused by the cyclone and appealed for increased food and other aid on emergency basis, reports BSS.

Honecker may never be tried

BERLIN, May 3: Former East German leader Erich Honecker will probably never stand trial in Germany, the federal Justice Minister was quoted as saying Friday. Honecker, 73, is wanted by German officials for allegedly issuing shoot-to-kill orders against would be escapees from now-defunct East Germany to West Germany, reports AP.

Kohl at odds with partners

BERLIN, May 3: Reviled by many eastern Germans and pressured by the opposition, Chancellor Helmut Kohl was at odds Friday with the ultra-conservatives in his own government. Kohl has governed since October 1982 in a coalition linking the centrist Free Democrats, his own Christian Democrats and their Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, reports AP.

Bid to defuse Azeri-Armenia issue

MOSCOW, May 3: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev brought together the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan today to try to defuse a bloody conflict between the two Soviet republics, an Armenian spokesman said. They discussed the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and two Armenia-populated villages in Azerbaijan, where Armenia says Soviet and Azeri troops recently killed 37 Armenians, reports Reuter.

Seen from the gallery

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Speaker permitted an hour's discussion on the issue. Thus began, what later turned out to be a not so sober debate on a heart rending event, that can be mildly termed as "politicking with disaster relief".

The opposition, especially the Awami League, appears to see the aftermath of the natural disaster as an opportunity to bounce back into the centre stage of national politics by assuming a high profile role in relief activities. It was this intention which apparently led behind Tofael Ahmed's (AL) proposal to form an All-party National Relief Committee with Acting President Justice Shahabuddin, as its head. This Committee will, according to the proposer, incorporate all political parties, and all other organisations interested in participating in relief activities.

The BNP, it can perhaps be said, sees the crisis as an opportunity to show that they are in effective command of the situation and prove to the people that they can deliver in face of crisis. The Prime Minister appears to take it as a personal challenge to her capacity to govern. Her bold and confident — at times verging on over-confidence — statement at the end of the hour-long (actually lasting much more) discussion bore unmistakable mark of her desire to face the emergency head-on and not allow the role of her government to be diluted or its central position compromised by setting up any national committee headed by the Acting President.

If the Awami League wanted some sort of an all-party arrangement to run the relief activities, they would have better served their interest by proposing such a "committee" to be headed by the Prime Minister and not by the Acting President. That way, they would have got their high profile role and would have made

the idea more acceptable to the BNP. Shahjahan Straj, however, made such a proposal which fell by the wayside as the AL-BNP verbal battle heated up.

Though the Leader of the House was sharp and caustic in her reply to the criticism of her government's performance of the last four days of relief work, she made a shrewd political move by saying, almost in passing towards the very end of her speech, that "I am ready to sit with you all even tomorrow, if you want. But I want to see action and not just talks". After her unusually strong speech the Opposition did not expect her to make this gesture and they had hardly anytime to react as the Speaker closed the discussion and took up other urgent business and the Prime Minister left the House.

Though every speaker, both from the Treasury Bench and more so from the Opposition, loudly proclaimed their intention of keeping the debate on the cyclone relief above politics, unfortunately ended up doing the exact opposite. While starting off with the current crisis, the Leader of the Opposition soon started talking about the disaster prevention initiatives of the AL government and said the present government was hiding the truth and proving to be unable to handle the crisis. She even hinted about misuse of relief goods. In a sharply worded re-echo to the famine of '74 and the corruption and misuse of relief materials at that time. "That was not even a natural disaster", she said.

The possibility of any coordinated and joint effort by the government, the opposition and all other parties cannot be said to have got a great boost from the nature of yesterday's discussion. It is anybody's guess how enthusiastic the response will be to the PM's willingness for an all-party talk on relief operation.

Save the survivors

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islands urgently need dry food, shelter and drinking water. If prompt measures are not taken soon hundreds of affected people are sure to die. Shortage of mechanised vessels and helicopters are mainly hampering the relief operations.

Our Barisal correspondent Arup Talukdar reports that water has not yet received from Manpur islands and as such helicopters could not land here. Diarrhoea has broken out in Urir Char, Hatiya, Sandwip and Manpara. No medical teams have reached these islands yet. Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is expected to visit Sandwip and other battered islands today (Saturday).

In Char Nizam, bodies of 66 people were found floating on Friday. The fate of 5000 people missing from Dhala Char could not be till yesterday known. The State Minister of Education could not fly to the affected areas on Friday due to inclement weather.

Nearly half of an estimated 4000 acres of coastal land under afforestation programme was damaged with most of the trees uprooted. Several cracks have developed in the embankment at Manpara.

Our Khulna based staff correspondent Syed Issa reports: The environment throughout coastal belt of Bhola district was polluted as innumerable carcasses litter the shoreline. After five days of the cyclone,

communications could not be restored with many remote islands. Nearly 50,000 people were living in those islands. Their lives are threatened as they are not getting food, shelter and drinking water.

Relief materials sent from Dhaka are piled up at Bhola district headquarters and they could not be despatched to the battered islands due to shortage of vessels and the rough sea. Thirty tons of relief materials donated by Caritas destined for Bhola are now stacked up at Barisal to be transported. An official of a Swedish-based NGO at Bhola told The Daily Star that if emergency supplies of food and drinking water were not sent to the affected areas immediately thousands of survivors would die.

Army personnel distributed 10,000 pieces of bread in the affected areas on Friday. Major General R.A.M. Golam Mukhtar, GOC, Jessore area visited the affected areas on Friday and told The Daily Star that logistic supports were inadequate compared to the emergency.

Hundreds of people are still missing and there is no move to know their whereabouts due to shortage of vessels. In Bhola, only 68 cyclone shelters were set up for a total of 40,000 people. There are 14 lakh people in Bhola district out of which eight lakh people were affected in Monday's cyclone and tidal bore.

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