

Battle for survival

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men and crew, who had been missing in the sea with 15 fishing boats and trawlers, returned on Sunday. The others are still missing.

Amira Begum was found at the upazila complex waiting anxiously. Her young son Abul Mansur who left home for fishing in the Bay four days before the disaster was yet to return.

Saturday's nor-wester multiplied the sufferings of the cyclone-affected people of the upazila. Thousands of cyclone survivors of the areas have so far received meagre relief materials.

Due to dislocation of communication with Manpara, relief goods could not be sent to the upazila. Prices of essentials there rose two to three times.

Standing crops and the cross dam in the area were totally damaged. The afforestation programme on the dam was fully ruined.

About 30,000 people living on the 50-mile-long cross dam in worst-hit Dhalchar were in a distress condition. Besides, 10,000 more living on the 10-mile-long cross dam from Syedpur to Farashganj were virtually passing days without food.

They have received relief neither from the government nor any non-government sources.

State Minister for Social Welfare is now conducting government relief operation in the cyclone-hit areas of the district.

Barisal Control Room told The Daily Star that the relief operations would not start as the relief coordinator is yet to reach the town. The operations are scheduled to be channelled from Barisal to the battered offshore islands Bhola, Projpur and Jhalakati will come under the operations.

The naval ships which left for Bhola with relief goods could not reach there till

Sunday. Relief materials are inadequate compared to the needs of the affected people. The Control Room said more information about deaths and devastation is pouring in and it would take some days to assess the extent of damage.

Red Crescent central control room put the death figure at 1,25,661 people till Sunday. The figure is however rising every hour.

UNB reports: About 15,000 cyclone-hit people in remote char areas of the district still remained marooned and the district administration asked for helicopter urgently to evacuate them.

Unless these marooned people are evacuated immediately, their lives will be at stake, the district officials cautioned the higher authorities.

BSS adds: The government on Sunday dropped a huge quantities of relief materials in the affected areas by Air Force helicopters.

Air Force helicopters dropped 45,000 pieces of bread in Chittagong areas and 1,50,000 pieces of 'chapati' in Kutubdia, Maheshkhali and Sandwip. These breads and chapatis were taken from Dhaka.

Nawaz Sharif

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of steel in moments of crisis. "She has overcome challenges in the past with admirable poise and exemplary courage and I have no doubt that she will do so now," the Pakistan Prime Minister observed.

The Pakistan Prime Minister said his country had sent some relief materials while he had brought some with him Sunday some more would follow soon, he said.

The relief materials include 2,500 tones of rice, 50,000 meter of clothes, 2000 kgs of medicines, food items and 5,000 tents.

Two helicopters were also been provided for relief works, the Prime Minister said, adding that he had instituted a relief fund to collect donations for the cyclone victims of Bangladesh.

Soon after his arrival, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left for Savar in a helicopter to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation Movement at the Jatiya Smriti Shoudha.

Emergency landing

The Sunday's inclement weather forced the helicopter carrying visiting dignitaries and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to make an emergency landing at Sreenagar in Munshiganj district.

Foreign aid

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Australia
Reuters adds: Australia will give 250,000 dollars (195,000 US) in aid to victims of the Bangladesh cyclone. Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said.

Australia has provided 50,000 tonnes of wheat for Bangladesh over the last month as part of relief unrelated to the cyclone.

WHO assistance

Emergency medical supplies and operational assistance provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are expected to arrive in Dhaka soon for the treatment of about 150,000 distressed people in the cyclone-affected areas of Bangladesh.

Five mini emergency medical kits have already arrived and seven more mini kits and four complete medical emergency kits comprising 40 basic kits are arriving shortly, a WHO Press release said here today.

The total costs of these supplies are around 150,000 US dollars.

South Korea

In response to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's appeal to the international community the government of the Republic of Korea has decided to provide US dollar 100,000 in emergency aid to Bangladesh.

WFP allocation

AFP reports from Rome: The World Food Programme has decided to allocate 21,000 tonnes of food aid to victims of Monday's cyclone in Bangladesh, with 8,000 tonnes available immediately, the UN Organisation announced in a statement.

Expatriates

In Jeddah, the officials of the Consulate General of Bangladesh have donated an amount of Taka 27,000 to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.



Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called on Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban Sunday. — PID photo.



Bernard Kouchner French Minister for Humanitarian Action, addressing a press conference at Sonargaon Hotel on his arrival in Dhaka on Sunday. — Star photo

Navigability of Ctg port

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port cargo will not sail out. The government revenue receipts from foreign trade operations will decline as a result. The contraction in the economy will further deepen.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has drawn the immediate attention of the government to the urgent needs for resumption of operation at Chittagong Port at the earliest.

The Chamber wants that the government give the highest priority to the clearance of Chittagong Port and immediately announce when it will be operational. "This is essential not only for the cargo on the high seas but also for opening of LCs," the MCCI sources said.

The MCCI circles suggested that a task force be immediately constituted with representatives of trade and industry for clearance of cargo stranded and damaged at the Port.

The Chamber had already made representations to Bangladesh Bank for extension and enlargement of working capital facilities to the importers concerned, particularly those belonging to the industrial category. Such facilities, it felt, are necessary for availability of funds to clear the cargos that are still useable.

The stocks of imported goods awaiting clearance at the port at the time the cyclone hit, are valued in the range of between 50 and 75 million US dollars, according to unofficial estimates available with trade and industry circles in Dhaka. About 60 per cent of such stocks have been totally damaged, the related circles said.

The MCCI sources suggested that the National Board of Revenue (NBR) consider duty concessions or exemp-

tions on the affected cargo to help clear the port warehouses or godowns.

The Chamber circles pleaded strongly to give all priority to scheduled shipment of export cargo, particularly garments, not only for implications of encashment of back of LCs but also for retention of quota.

They further suggested that storage facilities be developed at Zia International Airport so that chartered flights could be organised.

Bangladesh Biman's hangar complex which is nearly ready may be used for such storage with the armed forces given the responsibility for necessary security arrangements, while the same circles observed while noting that it would not be possible to organise chartered flights unless cargo was placed centrally.

The business circles in Dhaka told The Daily Star that the extent of damage to Chittagong Port was so extensive that it would be difficult to put it back in gear without adequate domestic resource support, coupled with effective international assistance. "What has happened to Chittagong Port is, unfortunately, still beyond the comprehension of the concerned ministry," one key functionary of a leading Chamber body observed.

The law and order situation in the tornado-hit industrial areas of Chittagong is also reported to have deteriorated. The affected units are facing the menace of theft, dacoity and hijacking because their stocks as well as machinery are lying exposed.

The MCCI sent a representation to the Home Ministry, calling for strengthening the vigilance by the law enforcing agencies in areas like Nazirhat,

Kalurghat, Export Processing Zone, and BSCIC industrial estates at Chittagong.

Meanwhile, a three-member businessmen's team which visited Chittagong, after the tornado, reported on Saturday to the MCCI that the port cargo area was not approachable from all sides. "Navigation in the port will depend entirely on how soon the authorities get the support of foreign organisations to clear the wreckage from the Karnaphuli river and restore the cranes. The jetty itself will need immediate reconstruction," the report said.

The fact-finding mission from Dhaka also reported that damages to the industries located in the Export Processing Zone and Kalurghat were so severe that most industrial units "will not be able to go into operation unless in some cases the machinery is replaced or to totally dismantled and serviced. Industrial raw materials in these areas are almost unusable."

The ship surveyors, merchant mariners and hydrographic engineers at the Port City suggested that all necessary steps should be taken within the shortest possible time through reputed international firms and organisations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Meantime, arrangements should be made for loading and unloading of vessels coming to Chittagong at the outer anchorage with large barges with cranes, lighterage facilities for use as a floating port until the time the port itself is made operational, the same circles stressed.

Relief fund utilisation

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Cabinet Secretary and PSO to the Supreme Commander, the Press Note said.

It was decided in the meantime to hand over more money from the President's Relief Fund to the relief committee headed by the Prime Minister in case of necessity.

These facts established that the news that Taka 211 crore of President's Relief Fund remained unused was baseless, the Press Note said.

Secondly, the allegation that there was no coordination among the Relief Coordination Committee headed by the Prime Minister, President's Relief Cell and President's Relief Storage was not true, the Press Note said.

In the meantime, different materials from the President's Relief Storage have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Relief Ministry and those materials are being released from the storage according to the demand of the relief ministry.

The allegation that the government has failed to face the post cyclone situation was also untrue, the Press Note said adding that relief materials including dry food are being sent everyday to the affected areas for distribution by Biman, helicopter and other means of transport. The government is continuing relief operation in all possible ways despite the fact that the communication system had totally collapsed in the cyclone battered areas.

The news that the Prime Minister had to appeal for international help as the Acting President did not do so was also completely baseless, the Press Note said.

The Prime Minister has appealed for international help after the decision that the Prime Minister would make the appeal as the head of democratically elected representatives, the Press Note said adding that, therefore, the Acting President has no need to make separate appeal for international help.

Rather this kind of appeal would be contrary to rules and norms and would create misunderstanding at international level, the Press Note added.

Foreign newsmen complain lack of facilities

By Staff Correspondent
Over a hundred foreign newsmen who have come to Dhaka to cover the cyclone devastations are not getting adequate cooperation and facilities to carry out their professional work, it is alleged.

Some foreign newsmen on Sunday complained that a media centre opened at Sonargaon Hotel has proved inadequate to feed them with necessary information and facilities.

It is gathered that most of the foreign newsmen are staying in Sheraton Hotel. But no media centre has been opened there. The Press Information Department, which is supposed to extend all necessary support to the foreign newsmen, is of little help to them, some foreign newsmen said.

Visiting French minister assures all-out assistance

By Staff Correspondent
Bernard Kouchner, the French Minister for Humanitarian Action, assured his country's all-out assistance to protect lives and prevent natural calamities in Bangladesh.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday morning soon after his arrival in Dhaka, Kouchner said he was carrying with him the deepest concern and sympathy of President Mitterand and the people of France for the cyclone victims.

Kouchner is leading a 10-member French delegation to assess the extent of damage caused by the cyclone, which would help his government to come up with emergency assistance.

He said his government was likely to help rebuilding the damaged infrastructure.

He mentioned that France was already involved in flood protection projects in Bangladesh. He also indicated the possibility of his country's help for building cyclone and flood shelters in the coastal areas.

The delegation carried with them about one ton of medicines for the cyclone affected people.

"This is just the beginning," said Kouchner who mentioned that his delegation would assess what kind of help France would offer to Bangladesh.

In reply to a question he said it would be difficult for his government to send helicopters for relief work at this moment. However, rubber boats may be provided for the purpose, he added.

Kouchner flew over the cyclone affected areas on Sunday along with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and others to see the devastation.

JCD confnce postponed

By DU Correspondent
The conference of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal scheduled for tomorrow (Thursday) was postponed for an indefinite period due to recent devastating cyclone in the coastal region.

The new date of the conference will be announced later.

Writ

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Constitution and for that purpose why they should not be directed to issue a notification in the official Gazette calling upon the electorate to elect a President and a Vice-President specifying the dates for filing of nomination papers, scrutiny of nomination papers and the day for holding the polls they are required by law to do.

The petitioner is N Saleem Ullah, and advocate of the High Court Division. He is also Secretary General of the Association for Democratic and Constitutional Advancement of Bangladesh (ADCAB) which is working for people's awareness about violation of the Constitution.

The petition has been filed in pursuance to a notice demanding justice served upon the Election Commission by the Mohammad Mohsen Rashid on behalf of the petitioner.

In the said notice it was inter alia stated that the Election Commission is under the legal obligation to hold elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President by June 4, 1991 within 180 days commencing from 6.12.1990 (when the offices of President and Vice-President fell vacant under Article 123(2B) of the Constitution).

He has also alleged that if elections to the said office are not completed by the EC within 4. 6. 91 as per provisions of Article 123(2B) of the Constitution, the country will plunge into a grave constitutional crisis as the present Vice-President appointed under Article 55A shall cease to have any constitutional authority to perform the functions of the President.

The Midnight File

Pope's appeal to help Bangladesh

VATICAN CITY, May 5: Pope John Paul II appealed Sunday for worldwide aid for Bangladesh and other places recently hit by natural disasters. The Pope, during his traditional Sunday noon blessing to the faithful in St. Peter's Square, also spoke of the victims of recent ethnic and political conflicts and called for an end to violence in Yugoslavia and Armenia, reports AP.

UNDRO appeal for relief

GENEVA, May 5: An urgent appeal for aid for more than two million survivors of the Bangladesh cyclone was issued Sunday by the office of the UN disaster relief coordinator (UNDRO). Survivors needed water and ready-to-eat food immediately. Also needed were helicopters to distribute aid, flat-bottomed boats, water-purification tablets, plastic containers for water, tents, and cooking utensils, reports AFP.

Soviet landslide kills 50

MOSCOW, May 5: A landslide buried eight houses and killed at least 50 people in a village in the Tien Shen mountains of Uzbekistan, Soviet media reported Sunday. Fearing more landslides, authorities evacuated 400 residents of the village after the disaster Saturday in Chigiristan, near the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, about 3,100 kilometers (1,900 miles) southeast of Moscow, reports AP.

The Doomsday

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comprehension of the planners of relief — if at all there is such a species — till the fifth day of the disaster, by which time all of the imperatives should have become clear to even a layman. It is plain that not many people in important places have exercised on rebuilding the scenario on any one of these unfortunate islands over a week's time-span starting, say, April 27.

To make up for lost time it must be appreciated that these islands are left with:

- a. No food and no drinking water
- b. No fuel
- c. No housing
- d. No utensils and no implements
- e. No supply of essentials and no power to buy them when supply would resume
- f. No crop to ensure their tomorrows
- g. No prospect of tilling and sowing at least for three more months and as such no paying jobs as well, and
- h. Less than half of the population that was there on April 28. It is possible that at least two from every khana or small family unit have perished which can pose all kinds of problems for social and economic normalisation of the island societies.

1. A very big risk of epidemics breaking out

2. A very big risk of people dying from injury, shock and plain hunger.

The above situation would persuade one to categorise the needs of the islands as amenable to large-scale and small unit operations.

1. Large-scale operations
Government has within its command all the grains that will be needed to sustain the islanders for three months and more. But it hasn't enough dry food to see the islanders through the initial fuel and waterless weeks. Government will be needing more carrier capacity than it commands at present in order to reach grains, water and fuel — and soon enough building materials to the islands. So they must:

1. Requisition both freight and passenger carrying vessels from inland river service — at least five hundred of them to start with. These will form the logistic backbone of the large operation of reaching food and water and fuel.

2. Purchase on an unprecedented scale all available stock of bamboo and bamboo-thatches at Dhaka, Sylhet and Hill Tracts and start moving them.

3. Close down all medical colleges for two weeks and send down brigades of five students of above 2nd year standard with all the necessary medical supplies.

The three could be combined into one comprehensive trust heading first to Chittagong port. As Chittagong city is itself badly hurt — all material have to go down first from Dhaka to Chittagong and then on to their final destination. For the first consignments to reach the islands the earliest — it is advisable to send all material by trucks to Chittagong. But the bigger of the total and sustained material relief must be shipped right to Chittagong en route to the islands. The first consignments must include:

1. Enough grains to sustain a population for at least a week — don't send whole wheat. Milled wheat — yes not without a supply of pure water. Dry food including chira and gur and biscuits — must welcome. Send potatoes and — its' a must — a lot of sugar.

2. Bulks of pure water and thousands of containers and vessels to stock and use it by the individual families. And hundreds upon hundreds of tubewells complemented fully by teams of 'sinking' fitters and mechanics.

3. Fuel — not only kerosene but firewood and jute sticks, by the tons.

4. Lungs and sarces — the second more than the first — of coarse quality, and used clothes by the tons.

5. Pots and pans — tens of thousands of them.

6. Enough of doctors and medicines.

7. A good supply of implements — carpenter's as well as peasants.

Small units would take care to take with them all of the above but, of course on the small scale. They would do well to carry their own food and water. They can carry collected chapatis and baked things. And they would make it certain to carry enough of metal strings and wires and the coconut 'kata' ropes and if possible, iron rails and pegs.

But the best thing the small units will take is the manpower which the government will continue to fail to marshal. A manpower electrified by idealism and giving their gratis.

The order of the day — young people, form teams, collect things and go — stand by them. Beat the government to the beaches of those islands. Only take care you don't eat up what is for the islanders to have.

Armed Forces gear up relief work

Armed Forces personnel are continuing their relief operation at the cyclone-hit coastal areas, according to an ISPR press release, reports BSS.

The army personnel supplied 2 lakh 95 thousand ruts from their own ration Sunday. Out of these, 70 thousand supplied from the Dhaka area were air dropped at inaccessible areas of Moheshkhali, Kutubdia and Sandwip. While 50 thousand from the Comilla area, 70 thousand from the Jessore area and 30 thousand from the Chittagong area were sent to different destinations including Sandwip, Urtchar, Hatiya, Char Fashion, Char Kakri, Mukri, Char Nizam and Dhal Char by helicopters.

Meanwhile, Jessore area troops including army medical personnel reached the remotest area of Dhal Char Saturday evening with a trawler carrying a sizeable quantity of relief materials.

These included rice, dal, edible oil, biscuits, potatoes, salt, sugar, baby-food, drinking water, match-boxes, sarces, fungus, old clothes, baby-wear,

kerosene oil and 200 hurricane lamps. It was the first vessel to reach this remote island near Char Feshion after the cyclone. Relief activities of Jessore area troops in other places are going on in full swing.

The Savar area troops sent nine tons of chira, two tons of gur, six maunds of muri and 416 tins of biscuits to Chittagong for distribution among the cyclone victims.

Seven army telecommunication teams and four army medical teams have also been sent from the Savar area to work in the affected areas of Chittagong and Noakhali respectively.

The Bogra area troops have sent two truck-load of chira, gur, sweet potatoes, sugar and powdered-milk. These will be distributed among the marooned people at the coastal areas and the off-shore islands by the Chittagong area troops.

The Chittagong area Commander Major General Mahmudul Hassan has visited different affected areas of Cox's Bazar to gear up the army relief activity in the area including burial of the bodies.