

# Following massacre of 33 woodcutters Tribals confine themselves in their homes fearing attack by Bangalees

From AKM Zahoorul Huq

RANGAMATI, Sept 17: Tense situation has been prevailing in Langadu and Baghaichhari thana of the district which developed following the abduction of 33 woodcutters on Monday, September 9 last by the tribal insurgents from Churakhali in Baghaichhari thana of the district.

It started intensifying and gripped the entire Chittagong Hill Tracts following the recovery of 28 bodies from the foot of the Churakhali hill in Baghaichhari thana of the district in a search jointly conducted by the police, Bangladesh Rifles and Army on Wednesday, September 11.

All the of victims, non-tribals, were from the different hamlets in Langadu thana of the district.

The bodies were buried at Langadu thana parishad premises under a Krishnachura

tree on an assurance of four members of the cabinet as the burial was obstructed by the agitated mob there when the high officials of the administration including the Divisional Commissioner was trying bury the bodies.

The mob was demanding the solution of the longstanding CHT problem and protesting the brutal killing of the innocent woodcutters by the tribal insurgents. The ministers flew there, assured the agitated mob that early solution of the CHT problem and managed burial on September 12.

In the face of continuous mass protest on the recent atrocities, stepping up by the tribal insurgents, the government constituted a seven member parliamentary committee headed by the Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah to probe into the

killing of woodcutters in Churakhali of Baghaichhari thana in the district. The committee is expected to start their work very shortly, a source from the committee said.

Meanwhile, different organisations in CHT have been going on protesting the atrocities of the tribal insurgents in the region.

An indefinite boycott programme started on September 14 in Baghaichhari thana of the district, which, according to the Parbatya Nagorik Parishad, will continue till solution of the Churakhali massacre.

Parbatya Nagorik Parishad, with the announcement of the programme has been refraining the Bangalees from any sort of trade with the people living in hill or Paharis. Bangalees are not buying or

selling any commodities to or from the Paharis, it was reported.

The parishad, according to the programme, has stopped movement of any forest produce by boat or raft in the Kachalong valley.

Ninety per cent people — both tribals and non tribals — have been surviving on forest produce using the Kachalong valley.

Paharis are keeping themselves aloof from attending the offices in Langadu and Baghaichhari thana apprehending clash with the Bangalees. They also do not come to the bazaars or public places where Bangalees are majority.

Tribals are absent apparently in travelling by launches in the riverine routes since September 10 last and thin the buses.

By this time, a dawn to dusk hartal was observed in Rangamati and Khagrachhari hill district on September 14, called jointly by All Party Unity Forum, Khagrachhari district unit of BNP and Parbatya Gono Parishad while a half-day hartal was observed in Bandarban on September 15 protesting the massacre of Churakhali, stepped up by the tribal insurgents on September 9, called by the Nagorik Adhikar Sangrakhyan Committee.

Processions were brought out and rallies were held in Kachalong, Naniarchor, Langadu and Baghaichhari thana as well as district headquarters of Rangamati hill district while simultaneously, the agitated mob in Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts protested the massacre stepped up by the tribal insurgents.



SYLHET: Managing Director of Jalalabad Gas T & D Systems Ltd speaking at the inaugural function of the executive committee of Jalalabad Gas Officers Welfare Association held here recently.

— Star photo

## Jute growers not fetching fair prices of produces despite bumper production

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Sept 17: The jute growers of greater Rajshahi region are unable to sell their produces for want of jute-buyers this year.

A few incidents of burning jutes and showing agitations by the farmers have already been reported in these areas.

According to the official sources, about 56,000 bales of raw jute have been produced in Rajshahi district from 15,400 acres of lands brought out under jute cultivation this season.

In Chapainawabganj 4000 acres of lands were cultivated for jute output and about 14,200 bales of raw jute have been produced this season from those lands.

The jute directorate official sources in Rajshahi said that total amount of lands and rate of per-acre production had been very satisfactory during the current season. The BADC sources said that a total of six lakh bales of jute had been produced in greater Rajshahi region which was two times more than that of the last year.

But the farmers seem happy with the record production of jute as they cannot sell these.

Rajshahi Jute Mills — the only one of its kind in the area has bought 21,779 quintals of raw jute from July 1 to September 7 this year. The mill has now stopped buying jutes for want of money, sources said. The mills owes about Taka 10 crore to the farmers.

The private jute traders are not reportedly interested in buying raw jutes this year, as price of jute has fallen gradually which has exposed them to risks of suffering loss.

In a village market of Naogaon about 4,000 maunds of jutes were supplied last Wednesday but not a single maund was sold.

Failing to sell their produces the farmers set blockade on the Naogaon-Rajshahi highway by hoarding their unsold jute on

the road at Sutibari hat under Manda thana of Naogaon last week. They also burnt some jute and chanted slogans demanding steps for buying jutes by the government authorities.

Some other incidents of agitations were also reported from Chapainawabganj and rural areas of Rajshahi districts.

The market price of jute is very much fluctuating and is solely controlled by the middle men (Faria). Jutes per maund sell between Taka 200-300 depending on the quality.

Meanwhile, the money

lenders in the village areas are taking opportunity of the awkward position of the farmer and lending money on higher interest.

Some dealers are also using the opportunity. They are hoarding jutes in their godowns buying these from the farmers at a considerably lower price and mostly on credit.

Having not been able to sell jutes, the farmers cannot proceed for the next cultivation of rabi (dry season) crops and boro paddy which are very important for them.

## Ten sentenced to 5 yrs RI for extortion of tolls

From Our Correspondent

KISHOREGANJ, Sept 17: Ten persons were sentenced to suffer five years rigorous imprisonment on charge of extorting illegal tolls, court sources said adding that two others were acquitted of the charge.

Md Shahidullah, Additional Session and Special Tribunal Judge of Kishoreganj in a judgment delivered on September 9 also fined all the convicts Taka 1000 each or in default to suffer six months RI more.

The convicts are Wahab, Hakim, Samraj Mia, Rapon, Babu Mia, Shamim, Ashik, Premik, Renu Mia and Shahiduddin, all of village Ghagra in Mitamoin thana.

According to the prosecution, the accused persons used to collect tolls at the rate of Taka 10 from each boatman per day forcibly at the ferry ghat near Ghagra bazar in Mitamoin thana. The local UP Chairman lodged a written complaint to the TNO of Mitamoin following which a case was filed

## Two housewives killed in separate incidents

From Our Correspondent

KISHOREGANJ, Sept 17: Two housewives were killed in separate incidents in Kuliarchar thana recently, witnesses and police sources said.

One Suniti Barman, 40, wife of Amarchan Barman of village Algirchar died on the spot while she was hit with a iron-made cauldron on the head by one of her neighbours on September 3. The incident was a sequel to an altercation over a trivial matter. Police later took the assailant, Swarnalata Barman into custody.

In another incident, one Zarina Khatun, 40, wife of Haji Khalilur Rahman of village Bhatgaon was beaten to death by her step her sons. They first attacked the victim while an arbitration was going on to settle the land dispute of the family and beat her mercilessly.

Two separate cases were registered with Kuliarchar police station in this connection.

## At least 20 hurt in BNP AL clash in Natore

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Sept 17: At least 20 persons were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP at Gurudaspur thana of Natore district Sunday, witnesses and police sources said.

The clash occurred when the activists of AL allegedly attacked the house of Md Abdul Aziz, the president of Gurudaspur thana INP and Dharabarisha UP chairman yesterday.

The local people said, the clash occurred as a sequel to the rivalry between Md Abdul Aziz and the ex-chairman of Dharabarisha UP Abdul Majid who belongs to AL.

According to Gurudaspur police, riot were sent from Natore to bring the situation under control.

Police arrested two persons in this connection. The seriously wounded persons are: Abdus Samad, Moniruzzaman and Akhtaruzzaman Pintu.

## Woman dies in road mishap

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Sept 17: One woman was killed when she was hit by a running truck on Kushtia-Rajbari road on Tuesday near Durgapur Kazi para of Kumarkhali thana. The woman was identified as Kulsum Begum, 40.

While crossing the road in the morning she was hit by the running truck and was seriously injured. She succumbed to the injuries on way to Kushtia General Hospital, source in the hospital said.



RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former head of the caretaker government recently visited the RU History Department and exchanged views with the teachers there. Rahman was a teacher of the said department. He is seen with some of the teachers of the department.

— Star photo

## Committee would be formed to consider demands of OEOP : VC

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Sept 17: After nine day long continuous strike, officers and employees of Rajshahi University will join their works from Tuesday. The Officers Employee Oikya Parishad (OEOP) withheld its strike from Monday after an assurance came from the Vice Chancellor Prof M Eusuff Ali that a committee would be formed comprising Syndicate members Rajshahi University Teachers Association (RUTA) representative with a view to consider the logical demands of OEOP.

Earlier, Prof M Eusuff Ali, Vice Chancellor of the university at a press conference arranged at his official residence on September 15 said the authority had already realised the 57 point demand of OEOP

of 96.

Giving the breakup of demand, Prof Eusuff said that after 3 successive meetings of syndicate, authority realized 16 demands of offices out of 24, 23 point demand of third class employees (shohayok karmachari) out of 35 demand and 18 point of 4th class employees (Shadharan Karmachari) out of 37 demands.

Prof Eusuff said if the illogical demands of officers and employees were realized, the administrative chain of the university then would permanently be destroyed and it would be clear violation of state finance act and directives of University Grant Commission (UGC).

Even enconsonance will prevail with other universities

of the country and strong resentment would be created among the teachers.

Prof M Mukhlesur Rahman, Registrar of the university reading out the written statement said government provides 95 per cent financial support to the university and for this reason authority follows the government's rules and procedure regarding the financial facilities to the officers and employees.

Prof M Altaf Hussain, Pro-Vice Chancellors said that most of the demands of officers and employees were illogical. Giving an example Prof Altaf said that some of the demands include like, 'no show cause notice and termination letter should be issued without consultation of union leaders.'

## Diarrhoea claims 11 lives, affects 1200 other

PABNA, Sept 17: Diarrhoea claimed 11 lives and affected 1200 people at five thanas of the Chalan Beel area in last few days, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Atik, 32, Dulal, 16, Samad, 40, Abdul Hye, 32, Krishno Pada Biswas, 42, Adam Ali, 24, Tasiron 2, Shamir, 26, Aminul 40, Salim, 16, and Akter Ali, 36. The affected thanas are: Chalmohar, Gurudaspur, Singra, Faridpur and Taras.

According to official sources, the disease broke out in an alarming proportion due to shortage of drinking water and absence of proper sanitation facilities.

Acute scarcity of pure water is prevailing as many tubewells and para pumps have been submerged by flood water. As a result, people are forced to drink contaminated pond and river water, the sources said.

## Two awarded 3 yrs for smuggling

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Sept 17: Two persons were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for three years Friday on charge of smuggling.

On February 6, 1995 BDR personnel recovered China fan bearings worth about Tk 25,000 being smuggled into the country and arrested Habibur Rahman of Tulshidanga and Monjur Hossain of Mirjapur both under Kalaroa thana in the act.

After prosecution Md. Alauddin Sardar, Judge Special Tribunal Court, Satkhira found them guilty as charged and awarded them the said imprisonment.

# A costly project designed to protect people living in cyclone disaster prone area

By Naimul Haq

MAHESHKHALI, (Cox's Bazar) August 17: It was four in the afternoon when Faizul Karim, 50, heard on the megaphone the warning of 'tuani, tuani' or cyclone, cyclone. Recalling some earlier forecasts which proved to be wrong, Karim hardly paid any attention to the warning. He thought like many other cyclones which changed course this one would do the same. So he continued doing some domestic chores in the dark cloudy weather by the bay side in Amtali Karim's neighbours at Napitpur, however, became restless as he viewed the fast changing weather and headed for the only concrete building in the area for shelter.

Soon the windy gusts became violent and the heaving tidal waves began flooding the coast of the island. At about eight Karim became sure that a cyclone was about to hit the island. As he and his family members ran for shelter, he saw tin-roofs flying and trees being blown away. 'We could not find any shelter. Already there were too many people inside the building. We stood outside a fragile looking building nearby along with about

250 others. Most of these were old men, women and children', Karim said.

The cyclone hit the island at about 10 in the night at a speed of over 200 kilometer per hour, razing almost everything to the ground. Tidal waves rising as high as 20 feet flooded the entire island. There was panic all over. I saw children drowning, mothers crying for help. A number of them were smashed against the wall of the building, killing them instantaneously', Karim said. 'In the dark cold night', Karim continued, 'I was carried by waves about six kilometer up to a place called Uzantha where I managed to climb a coconut tree. There seemed to be no survivors except four other men who also had climbed nearby trees. The horror continued till two in the morning devastating almost everything in the island'. Karim survived but lost nine members of his family and his left arm.

The next morning there was calm all over. Everything seemed lifeless. Bodies were floating all around. There were only a few survivors in Uzantha. Karim reached Matharbari on a floating tree. Cooked food, hardly enough to meet the need of about five hundred fellow men, women and children, was being airdropped here until relief by land arrived on the fourth day. The food items dropped by helicopters were flattened rice, biscuits, bread and molasses. The quantity was too little.

Md Patan Ali, 60, another survivor of the April 29-30, 1991 cyclone narrated a similar story. He lost a daughter-in-law and two of his dearest nieces. Unlike Karim, Ali heeded the warning on megaphone and took shelter well in time. At seven Ali went to a nearby building where three hundred other people had taken shelter.

Just after midnight repeated pounding by the strong waves smashed a part of the wall of the building drowning several people. Flying rooftops cut bodies of some into pieces. Ali miraculously survived climbing a tree. The nightmare ended after about four hours.

Ali and a few survivors reached Kalamarchhara union crossing river Kuhlalia on a damaged boat. They lived on banana and coconut for three days before finding relief.

The real horror was what actually happened after the cyclone. Thousands of decomposed bodies never got buried. Vultures ruled the sky mainly to pick flesh from the dead cattle. Relief, too little, arrived late. There was virtually no dry land for the survivors to build shelters. Diseases, especially diarrhea, spread fast claiming many more lives. Salt water contamination of drinking water posed a far greater threat. People panicked fearing more deaths.

Diseases claimed hundreds of lives everyday as medical help was too late to arrive. The human death toll, according to official figure, was 138,868. Over 90 percent of the livestock and the entire poultry population perished.

In 1970, the century's worst cyclone in the region killed 300,000 people leaving a trail of devastation. The high death toll was mainly due to absence of advance warning and inadequate evacuation facilities.

Twenty-one years later the cyclone of April 1991 hit the same region of the coastal belt. This time a costly evacuation plan for the 'high risk zone' saved lives of perhaps thousands. But the toll of human lives was still far too heavy. Evacuation was not always possible, especially from the remote islands. Besides, it is very expensive.

To find a solution to this problem, a master plan for multipurpose cyclone shelters in the storm-prone areas of the coastal belt was commissioned on the basis of recommendations of an inter-ministerial task force.

A multi-disciplinary team of national experts, drawn mainly from BUET and BIDS, carried out a six-month study in 1992. They recommended that 2,500 specially designed cyclone shelters be constructed to withstand wind speed of up to 260 km/hr. These shelters were to cover 12,046 sq. km in 46 thanas

from Teknaf of Cox's Bazar to Shyamnagar of Satkhira district. Most were to be built in the high risk zone securing a population of about 55 lakh.

Since 1991 the construction of over 1,200 cyclone shelters have been completed. The programme is being funded and implemented by Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, International Development Agency, Facilities Department, LGED, CARITAS and a number of NGOs. Once the programme is completed by 2002, about two-third of the population living in the high risk zone will be protected.

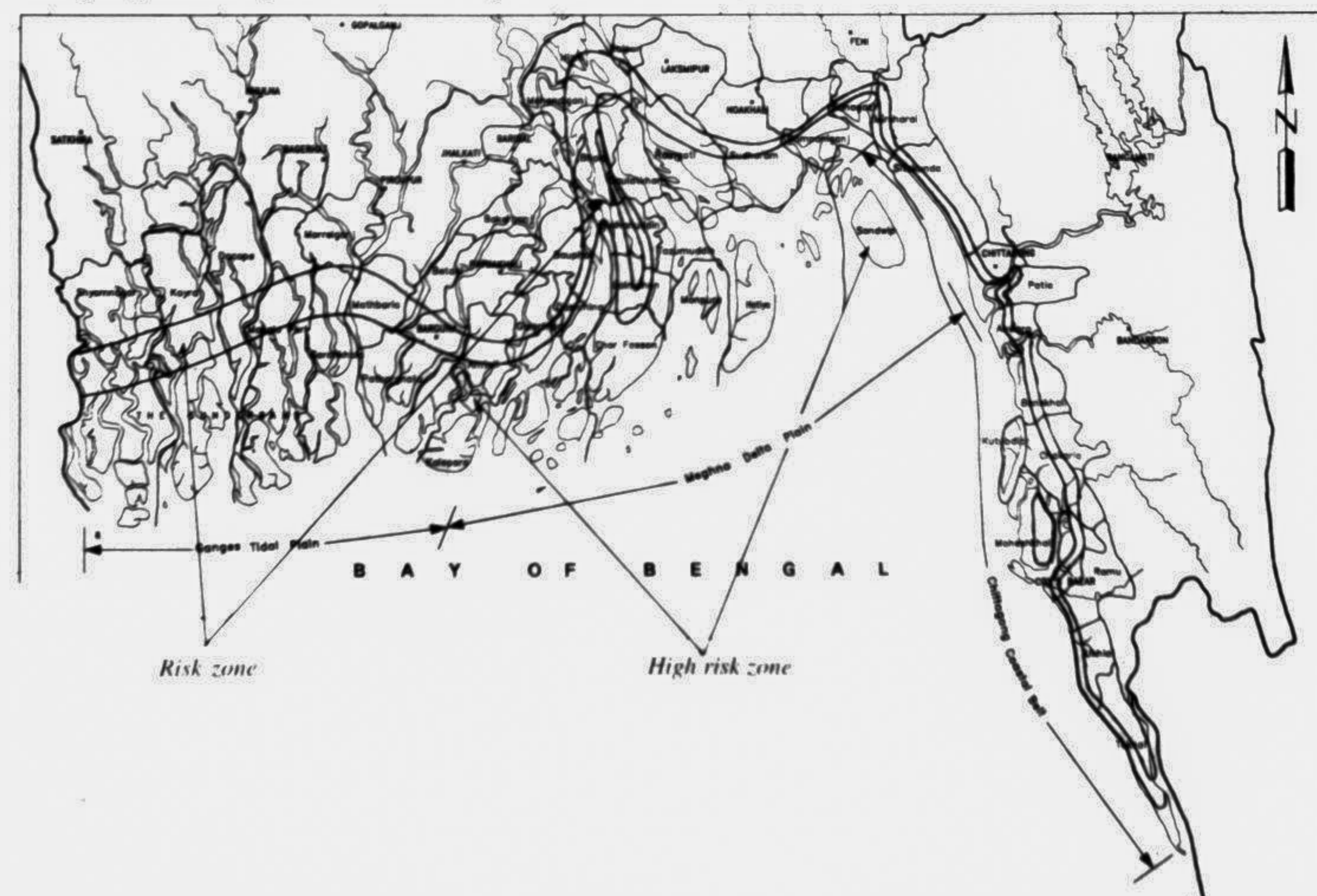
The success of this multipurpose cyclone shelter programme, however, depends largely on the cooperation and effective participation of the local people, who will play a major role in the management and maintenance of the shelters. The total cost of the programme is estimated at Tk 114,540 million.

In August 1994 UNDP and the Bangladesh government jointly organised a national workshop to promote cooperation among the government agencies and to encourage coordination

among government, non-government and international agencies during disaster preparedness and response. The External Resources Division and the Planning Commission are yet to decide who will be responsible for coordination.

While talking to the Daily Star, Akramul Islam, Director General of Disaster Management Bureau, said the donors are not very happy with the way things are moving. They recommended that his organisation, now administered by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, be under the direct control of the prime minister. Citing an example of the US government, Islam said, quick decision in disaster management is very important. Now at times they had to wait for days for approval of even an urgent decision. During disasters quick action was undeniably essential.

To make the organisation more meaningful, a draft legislation for national disaster management was prepared after a six-month study. The law was not, however, approved by the previous government.



The map, prepared by BUET and BIDS, shows the coastal zone prone to the risk of storm surge inundation due to tropical cyclones. Six out of ten cyclonic storms which develop in the Bay of Bengal hit Bangladesh coast. The area within the 'risk zone' where there is a possibility of loss of lives due to inundation by storm surges has been defined as 'high risk area'.



THE AFTERMATH OF THE DISASTER: The photo was taken a day after the April-29 cyclone in 1991 by our Staff Photojournalist AKM Mohsin.