

3 lakh Sidr-hit people still live in polythene hut, tents

UNB, Bagerhat

Some 2,86,000 people in 12 coastal districts which were severely ravaged by cyclone Sidr last November are still living in tents or polythene-made huts.

After successfully handling the immediate post-Sidr humanitarian assistance by providing food and non-food items to the victims, the government, development partners and non-government organisations seem to have been failed to provide permanent shelters to the affected people.

Officials in the Shelter Working Group (SWG), a conglomerate of around 200 organisations, including government, NGOs, UN agencies, and civil society groups, said only a quarter of the required rehabilitation has been completed in last six months.

Local people and administra-

tions said sufferings of the people might take a serious turn during the upcoming monsoon as the polythene huts and tents are not enough to protect them from rains or storms.

"We only had received one-time Tk 5,000, tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, or tents, some foods and clothes just after the Sidr," said Rizia Begum, 60, a Sidr victim in Southkhali village of Sharankhola upazila of Bagerhat, on Wednesday. Rizia said "for the last three months, we are not getting any government or non-government helps."

Her neighbours Momtaz, Rawanara, Ratan Hawlader, Nurunnahar and many others like them expressed similar grievances.

Meanwhile, thousands of people in Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Patuakhali, Barguna, Sundarbans areas are still living virtually under the open sky.

SWG estimated that 77,428 households need to be constructed for the Sidr-affected people.

SWG officials said the government and some national and international NGOs are keen to work on shelter issues at Southkhali and some other worst affected areas. But, they cannot take initiative as countries like Saudi Arabia and India had expressed their interests to build

houses in those areas. After the Sidr, the Saudi and the Indian governments had assured Bangladesh of setting up 21,200 and 1600 households respectively, but not a single house was constructed until today in accordance with their promises.

"Upazila Nirbahi office has told us that 4,000 households will be built at Southkhali village at the Saudi expenses. But, we see no sign of the Saudi government activi-

ties," Chairman of Southkhali Union Anwar Hossain said.

He was also critical of the Indian government as "it is not working as per its commitment".

"The Indian government had said they would reform 10 villages of Southkhali union. But, as far I know till today it did not give a single penny in this regard," he said.

Asked about the progress of their rehabilitation activities, coordinator of Shelter Working Group, BMM Mozharul Haq told UNB they are working hard to provide every family with a house before the monsoon.

"People's sufferings during the rainy season will be unbearable. It will be very helpful for the Sidr victims, if permanent households could be set up before the monsoon," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

The wreckage of a truck lies on a road after it collided head-on with another truck in the port city's Gate No 2 area yesterday.

FOOD CRISIS, INCREASED OIL PRICE, CLIMATE CHANGE

Dhaka for immediate int'l action

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh calls for immediate global action to address three major global challenges - food crisis, increased oil price and climate change.

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Ismat Jahan, made this call while speaking on behalf of the least developed countries at the high level segment of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in New York Wednesday.

Ambassador Jahan said the price of food grains had surged to its record high, affecting the LDCs most disproportionately.

"In the LDCs where poor households spend nearly 70% of their income on food items, a sharp increase in food price was bound to have strong adverse impact on the incidence of poverty and human development," she said.

She expressed deep concern at a time when the poor countries had expected increased global support, food market had become further distorted. "Many food exporting countries had adopted restrictive measures through both tariff and non-tariff barriers," she added.

Ismat Jahan urged strategizing of the global response to the food crisis through a coherent and multi-pronged approach, addressing short, medium and long-term needs, said a press release received here yesterday.

She urged removal of the supply

side constraints and to ensure adequate food supply.

She underlined the need for providing targeted cash transfers and other direct support measures to vulnerable groups.

Ambassador Jahan called upon the development partners to immediately come forward with increased grant-based funding to assist the LDCs in meeting their rising food import bills and underlined the need for addressing systematic issues and undertaking long-term solution.

Ismat Jahan said agricultural productivity growth in LDCs had been slow and agricultural exports of LDCs, as share of their total exports, were declining dramatically.

She said since the late 1980s their agricultural trade deficit had widened rapidly and LDCs had emerged as net agricultural importers.

The agriculture sector of the LDCs was primarily rain-fed and thus its productivity was highly vulnerable to climate change, she added.

She underscored the need for scaling up of investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure to develop efficient agricultural production across the developing world.

She called upon the developed countries to fulfill ODA committing of 0.2% of their GNI to LDCs by 2010 and to write off all LDC external debts forthwith.

She demanded duty-free,

quota-free market access for all LDC products and urged the developed countries to provide access to appropriate technologies and related field at affordable cost to grow climate-resilient crops in LDCs.

She emphasised the need for regional cooperation in disaster preparedness and addressing the climate change.

The 16th session of the CSD is being held in New York from 5-15 May.

Rajshahi clinic owners withdraw strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Clinic and Diagnostic Owners' Association (CDOA) in Rajshahi withdrew their indefinite shut down yesterday noon following three fruitful discussions with the district high-ups.

"Since we were assured that there would be no unjustified drives, we decided to resume work from 3:00pm," said Dr Abdul Mannan, CDOA president.

CDOA leaders said they held meetings with Col Ezazur Rahman, regional chief of DGFI, at 11:00am, with Maj Kawsar of the joint forces at 12:00pm and with deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil at 1:00pm.

CDOA members shut down their clinics and diagnostic centers on Wednesday afternoon for an indefinite period after the CDOA president was manhandled during a drive at the clinics by the joint forces led by a magistrate. CDOA members also termed the drive as

'unjustified'. "We have convinced the authorities that there is civil surgeon and health director to monitor affairs inside the clinics and diagnostic centres," said Dr Mannan, adding, "There is no need to conduct raids without knowing the gap between rules and limitations of practical field."

"The authorities sought apology for the misconduct and we have been assured there will be no more unnecessary harassment," said Mokhesur Rahman, CDOA general secretary.

Illegal clinics and diagnostic centers had mushroomed in Rajshahi and miseries of patients were boundless for irregularities in the registered clinics before the state of emergency was declared in 2007.

As a result of the frequent drives by the joint forces and regular monitoring, the number of clinics in the city has shrunk to nearly 60 from over a hundred while most clinics and diagnostic centres were forced to have adequate facilities.

Task force drive at BGSL office in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

An army-led task force yesterday conducted a drive for the second day at sales and distribution office of Bakhrabad Gas Systems Limited (BGSL) in Sholoshahar Railway Station area in the port city yesterday.

Sources said the task force seized some files related to gas connections and billing statements from the office during the drive.

The task force seized some files during a drive on Wednesday.

They also disconnected nine connections in the industrial areas of Bayezid Bostami and Sitakunda upazilas on different charges.

The team conducted the drive as a part of its routine works. The drive was aimed at increasing efficiency among the officials and staffs of the BGSL to accelerate its activities.

Dhaka Polytech referred exams on Sunday

The referred examination of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute will be held on Sunday according to the schedule of Bangladesh Vocational Education Board, says a press release.

The candidates have been asked to be present at the exam hall in time.

Cops for serving people, not for harassment

IGP tells rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Noor Mohammad said services of police are meant to serve the people and not to harass them.

Any deviation from this principle by police irrespective of their rank and status would be severely dealt with, he warned.

The IGP said this while addressing Khulna district community policing rally as chief guest at Shaheed Hades Park yesterday afternoon.

Presided over by Khulna Police SuperYM Belalur Rahman, the rally was addressed by Khulna Divisional Commissioner Md Yunusur Rahman, Khulna DIG Asaduzzaman Mian, KMP Commissioner Mainur Rahman Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner of Khulna SM Firoze Alam, Khulna District Anti-Corruption Committee Convener Hafizur Rahman and Khulna Press Club President Wadudur Rahman Panna.

Noor Mohammad said the government has taken different steps to bring about a radical change in the police department. He called on the people to be vocal against police activities if those are illegal and criminal by nature.

The IGP said members of community policing must play their due role in containing crimes to establish peace in the society.

The government is determined to root out terrorists at any cost, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of an army-led taskforce come out of the sales and distribution office of Bakhrabad Gas Systems Limited (BGSL) in Sholoshahar Railway Station area in the port city yesterday.

DISTRICT BNP UNITS SUBMIT MEMO TO CA Release of Khaleda demanded

STAR REPORT

Leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations from different districts yesterday submitted memorandums to the chief adviser (CA) of the caretaker government to realise their 11-point demand including the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

In the memorandums, they also demanded lifting of the state of emergency, permission for open politics and withdrawal of all cases against the detained leaders, introduction of rationing system and necessary measures to check price spiral of essential commodities, and withdrawal of the gazette notification concerning the demilitarisation of constituencies.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong reports: BNP and its front organisations in the district submitted memorandums to the CA through the deputy commissioner to press home their 11-point demand.

Chittagong city unit leaders Md Ershad Ullah, Advocate Abdus Sattar, Dr Shahadat Hossain and Advocate Nazim Uddin were present on the occasion.

Chittagong city unit of Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal also handed over a similar memorandum.

Our Khulna staff correspondent says: A faction of city BNP yesterday submitted a memorandum to the CA through the deputy com-

missioner.

A total of 28 leaders led by former lawmaker M Nurul Islam Dadu handed over the memorandum to DCSM Firoze Alam in his office.

Faction loyal to detained city mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and former lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi will submit the memorandum on Sunday.

Our correspondent from Sirajganj reports: Leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations in the district yesterday submitted a memorandum to the chief adviser.

About 50 leaders and activists led by district BNP Secretary Humayun Islam Khan gathered at

the office of the deputy commissioner to submit the memorandum.

Our correspondent from Pabna adds: BNP district unit submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner yesterday.

President of Pabna district unit BNP Sirajul Islam Sarder and Secretary Habibur Rahman Tota were present on the occasion.

Our correspondent from Mymensingh reports: The district BNP submitted a memorandum to additional deputy commissioner yesterday.

General Secretary of district BNP Monjurul Hoque Monju was present on the occasion.

Road crashes kill 2

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and 10 others were injured in separate road accidents in Sirajganj and Dinajpur yesterday.

Our correspondent in Sirajganj reports: A rickshaw puller was killed and 10 others were injured in two separate road accidents in Sirajganj yesterday.

Police and witnesses said Mohir Uddin, 28, a rickshaw puller of Ullapara, died on the spot when a truck hit his rickshaw from behind at Neurgachha under Ullapara upazila in the district yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, about 10 passen-

gers were injured in another road accident when a Dhaka-bound bus from Rajshahi collided head-on with another bus at Dabirganj on the Dhaka-Bonpara highway at noon.

The injured were rushed to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital and Tarash Upazila Health Complex. Of the injured, condition of four is critical, hospital sources said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

Our correspondent in Dinajpur adds: A woman was killed in a road accident on Dinajpur-Bogra highway at Nawabganj upazila in the district yesterday afternoon.

The identity of the deceased could not be known, but police quoting locals said that the woman, aged about 40, was mentally-challenged.

The accident took place when a speedy Dinajpur-bound passenger bus crashed her under its wheels while she was crossing the highway.

Grand finale of Aktel Debate Championship in Ctg tomorrow

CU CORRESPONDENT

The grand finale of Aktel Debate Championship 2008 will be held tomorrow at Theatre Institute of Chittagong (TIC) auditorium.

Drishy Chittagong, an educational and cultural organisation of the port city, organises the debate contest that began on May 11 in participation of 12 schools and eight universities from Chittagong and Dhaka.

Economist Atiur Rahman is scheduled to be present on the occasion as the chief guest with Drishy Adviser Bilkis Rashed in the chair.

Aktel Chief Financial Officer Nora Junita Hussain, Head of Corporate Affairs Javed Tariq and Editor of Star Campus Shahnur Wahid would also attend the programme as guests of honour.

The participating schools are Cider International School, Bay View School, Sunshine Grammar School, Child Heaven School, Chittagong Grammar School, Radiant School, Standard School, European Grammar School, Independent School, Cantonment English School, GEMS English Medium School and Chittagong Sunshine School.

Participating universities are Dhaka University, Chittagong University, North-South University, University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC), Independent University Bangladesh (IUB), Premier University, Stamford University and International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC).

Star Campus, a weekly supplement of The Daily Star, is media partner of the competition.

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Short listed candidates for the above two positions will be invited for an interview and may be asked to give a seminar at CPD. Interested candidates should provide their resume with publication record and a photograph by post, fax or electronic mail by May 31, 2008.

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