Doomsday Averted

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As we reached the Chittagong Railway Station at about 2:30am Wednesday night there was clear symptom of an impending disaster. Incessant rain accompanied by gusty wind was suggesting of a fast approaching cyclone, Mahasen.

Panic gripped the port city as the day broke with clouds hanging heavy and menacing. The Met office forecasted that the cyclone might strike the Chittagong coast at around 10:00am. People chose to remain indoors and were preparing for Mahasen and its devastation.

But suddenly, the rain stopped and the sky started to brighten. Many came out of their residences to do their daily activities. Still it was not the usual picture of the bustling city, also known as the country's business capital. Business establishments, educational institutes, the export processing zone were all closed and activities of the airport and seaport were suspended.



PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

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Confusion gripped people at around noon as there was no sign of Mahasen, although there was a gusty wind and intermittent rains. Many of the two lakh people in the area, who had taken refuge in the cyclone centres and safe places to safeguard them from Mahasen, started leaving for their homes. They were afraid that their valuables would be looted by opportunists as the weather improved.

There were others who were actually waiting to see the storm. A large number of people gathered at the Chittagong city protection embankment built along the coastline of Patenga—not to enjoy the rough sea but experience, first hand, the strength of the cyclone. From a fresh weather forecast, they came to learn that Mahasen might hit the coast in the afternoon.

Fear and anxiety in the faces of the people were still evident. Many, especially the elderly could not heave a sigh of relief, despite the growing possibility that the impending disaster had been averted.



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