

Government urgently needs to arrange relief for all flood-hit people



MASADUZZAMAN

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WE have not seen such devastating floods in the country since 1988. Every year during monsoon, the haor areas of Sylhet and Sunamganj districts experience flooding – but it has never been this catastrophic. Within a very short period of time, the entirety of the two districts were flooded. It is impossible to describe how

inadequate compared to the needs of the people. The lack of coordination among different government agencies has always been a major barrier in implementing any plan effectively. That has also been the case during this flood. As we know, and has been reported in the newspapers, there were forewarnings that the flood situation would get worse. Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) knew about it around 15 days ago and informed the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) about it so that they could take measures to save the crops, etc. But we do not know if the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) had this information. Had all the government agencies concerned worked together, the

Why not declare Sylhet, Sunamganj as ‘disaster zones’?



DWOHA CHOWDHURY

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IT was pitch-dark when I entered Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital on Saturday afternoon. The ground floor was submerged in knee-high floodwater. I climbed up the stairs to the first floor to find an elderly patient named Ana Miah lying on the floor. As the ground floor of the hospital got flooded that morning, all the patients

to be rescued. Even the shelters in the remote areas are waiting for relief. All means of connectivity are gone. One can hardly find a boat to wade through the flood; the boatmen who are willing to give a ride are asking for an exorbitant amount of fare. Sylhet Deputy Commissioner Md Mozibor Rahman said even the administration is struggling to find boats to extend rescue and relief work to the remote areas. Police, army, navy and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel, as well as the general public, are trying to provide help in any way possible. But what shocks me is the nonchalant attitude of our public representatives. Most of the MPs, upazila and union chairmen, and city and municipality

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councillors are absent in this moment of crisis. Only a few people, like Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmed, were seen coming to his constituency to extend humanitarian support to the distressed people. And I have been seeing a general lacklustre attitude towards flood management for a while. Since the flash floods in 2017 destroyed Boro harvest in the country’s northeast region, I have been constantly searching for a concrete explanation as to why floods have been so devastating in the region in recent times.

The answer is complex. Experts have tried to explain it in many ways, but it boils down to a combination of climate change, destruction of hills, deforestation, unplanned development work in the wetlands, and the massive loss of navigability in all the rivers in the upper and lower Meghna basin. All of these reasons are the results of human actions.

Has the government come up with any solutions to manage floods? I see none. After repeated calls from concerned citizens, it is rather disappointing to see the government only focused on infrastructural development, with little to no concern about conserving nature and the environment.

Several concerned organisations and citizens have already urged the authorities to declare the flood-affected areas as a “disaster zone,” per the Disaster Management Act, 2012. Doing so will empower the local administrations to work more extensively and ease getting adequate support from all government offices.

The flood is just the beginning of the disaster. It will take months to rehabilitate the affected population and rebuild what has been damaged by the calamity. I hope the authorities concerned are preparing for that.



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badly the people have been suffering, as they have been living under the open sky for days now. They are waiting desperately for food and shelter. But surprisingly, the government does not seem to have an efficient relief management plan for the victims. We have seen in the media that there is a shortage of relief, especially baby food, in the affected areas, which should not have been the case. We have seen how the local government officials are seeking assistance from people. In the current circumstances, the government must immediately provide the flood-hit people with dry foods such as biscuits, breads, puffed rice, and safe water so that people can at least survive. The government must gear up its relief operations. I think the first thing that the government should have done as the flood situation was getting out of control was declare a local emergency and engage the army and others to immediately start helping people with relief and additional emergency services. I remember, in 1988, people in Dhaka got united to help the flood victims across the country – they made roti for them and went to the regions to help the victims. This time the situation may not be as bad, but still the government’s measures seem to be very

damages done by the floods could have been reduced. We have also heard that many of the development projects taken in that region are actually making the flood situation worse. People are particularly mentioning the all-weather road going through the haor area which has become a major barrier for the water from upstream to flow downstream. The government must look into these allegations and correct the faults that have been created in the name of development. We also know how the rivers and water bodies in the Sylhet and Sunamganj areas have been grabbed and filled up over the years. The Surma River has literally been choked up by plastic pollution. Don’t our authorities know these facts? If they do, what have they done to save these water bodies? And, will we take any lesson from this devastating flood that has been wreaking havoc in Sylhet and Sunamganj? Already many other districts have been affected by flood. And we do not know when the situation in Sylhet and Sunamganj will improve. For now, the government’s only priority should be to save lives by providing the affected people with food, water, medicine, and shelter.

▲ Sylhet railway station and its surrounding areas are submerged in waist-high floodwater.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

were moved to the first floor. Ana Miah was struggling to breathe, no oxygen available for him as the central oxygen line had been disconnected, thanks to the power outage that engulfed not just the hospital, but the entire Sylhet district. While this is the scenario in the city, one can only imagine the suffering the people in the remote areas of Sylhet and Sunamganj have been enduring since Wednesday. Just imagine: Your house is under floodwater, there’s no electricity, your phone is out of charge and mobile network, there’s no food or any hope of being rescued. People from outside the flooded region, who have family members and/or friends stranded in the area, are similarly distressed as they can’t contact their loved ones. Social media is swamped with posts from worried users seeking any update about their stranded loved ones or any information of rescue attempts. After several attempts, I managed to establish contact with some remote areas. All I heard was people in distress, pleading

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Memo No. 00.00.1561.033.09.05.2022-380 Dated: 19-06-2022.

e-GP Tender Amendment Notice

It is hereby informed all concerned that the e-GP tender called of Patiya Municipality Memorandum No. 00.00.1561.033.09.01.2022-296 dated: 22/05/2022 has been amended as follows due to unavoidable reasons.

Sl	Amendment/Corrigendum	Old Value	New Value
01	Tender ID	696638	
02	Name of Project	Patiya Pourashava Infrastructure Development Project (PPIDP).	
03	Package No.	PPIDP/CC-04	
04	Description of works	Construction of 03-storied (With 5-storied Foundation) Munsir Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad Community Resource Centre.	
05	Corrigendum made of BOQ Item No. 21 & following date		
	Document last selling date & time	22/06/2022 17:00	03/07/2022 17:00
	Meeting end date & time	15/06/2022 17:00	21/06/2022 17:00
	Closing date & time	23/06/2022 15:00	04/07/2022 15:00
	Opening date & time	23/06/2022 15:00	04/07/2022 15:00
	Last date & time for tender/proposal security submission	23/06/2022 12:00	04/07/2022 12:00

These are an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd/-
Parakram Chakma
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