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It may be as bad as Sidr, or worse

Experts say it depends on windspeed during landfall

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Geographical location, wind speed, and a storm surge are the features that make Cyclone Mocha different from the recent cyclones that hit Bangladesh, meteorologists say.

They said Mocha could be as strong as Sidr, which had hit the country in November 2007. However, while Sidr was a post-monsoon cyclone, Mocha is a pre-monsoon one.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), this will be the first "very severe" cyclone to hit Cox's Bazar and the North Myanmar coast in the past 30 years. They have also not predicted such a storm surge at the Saint Martin's Island in the same period of time.

A storm surge is a coastal flood or tsunami-like phenomenon of rising water, commonly associated with low-pressure weather systems such as cyclones.

"The main differences [between Mocha and other recent cyclones in the country] are the geographical location and wind speed. The cyclone is still gaining strength but might weaken during landfall," Samarendra Karmakar, former director of the BMD, told The Daily Star yesterday.

But, it also may get stronger during landfall.

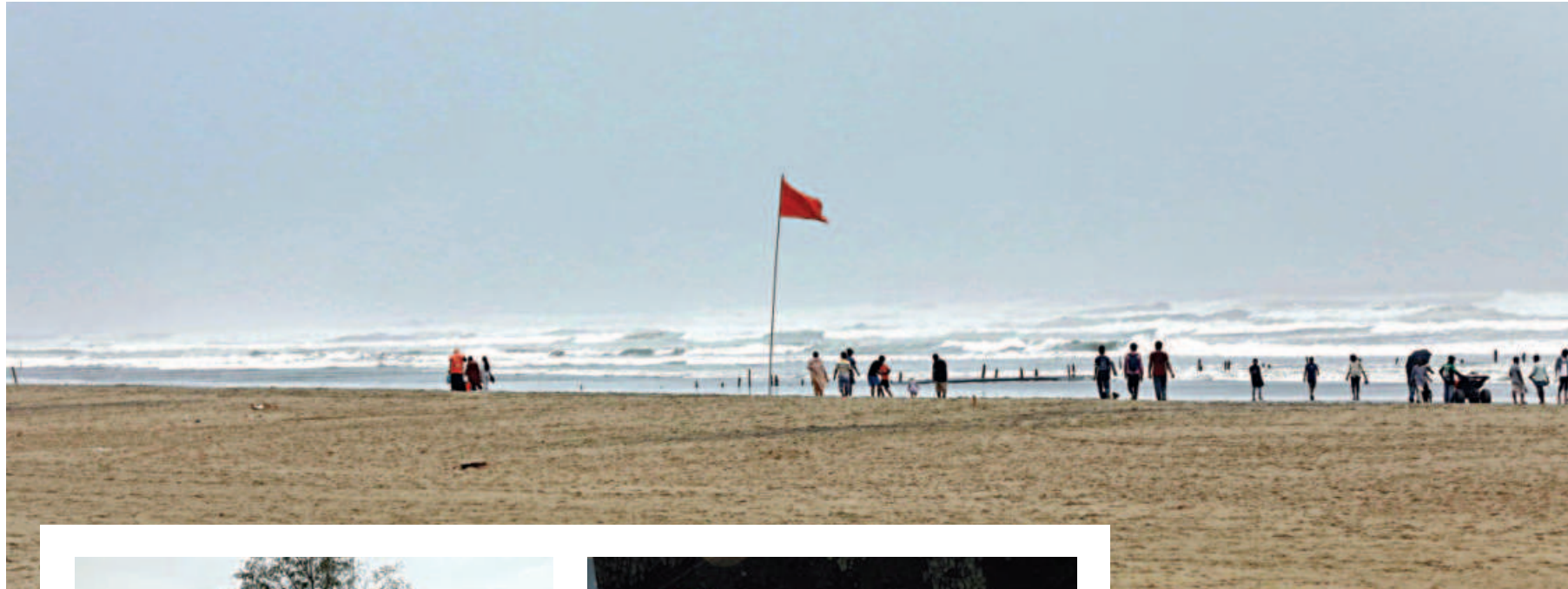
Comparing Mocha to Sidr, he, however, said that when Sidr was 1,320km away from the mainland, its windspeed was up to 215km/h; and, during landfall it was 223kmph.

"So, this cyclone [Mocha] may get stronger while heading towards the mainland," he said, adding that Saint Martin's Island would be the worst hit area.

"The cyclone will sweep every thing out when crossing the island."

Weather officials and experts said Mocha is

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Authorities yesterday warn all to stay safe and avoid the beach area in Cox's Bazar by raising a red flag in response to Cyclone Mocha intensifying into a very severe cyclonic storm. Volunteers in Teknaf used megaphones to urge residents to move to cyclone shelters before the storm, and by nightfall, many did.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Over 1.3 million evacuated as Mocha set to unleash fury

STAR REPORT

The government evacuated over 1.2 million people to safety in Cox's Bazar and the efforts continued until late last night as Cyclone Mocha kept getting fiercer by the hour in the Bay of Bengal.

The cyclone will make landfall in the afternoon today in Bangladesh and Myanmar and bring winds of up to 200km/h and trigger storm surges up to 12 feet in Cox's Bazar.

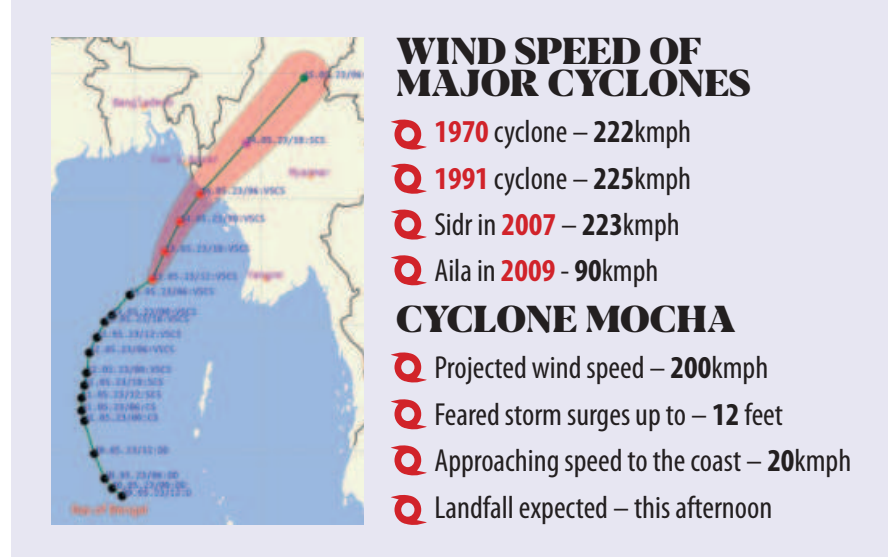
Hours before the eye of the cyclone passes through Bangladesh, people living along the coastline will see bad weather, said Azizur Rahman, director of Dhaka Meteorological Department.

As of 6:00pm yesterday, Mocha was around 525km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar, approaching the coast at a speed of 20km/h.

But it may move faster as it comes closer to the coast, said renowned meteorologist Quamrul Hasan.

Mocha began as a depression near the Andaman Sea at the beginning of this month and slowly turned into a cyclonic storm on May 10.

The Met office advised "great danger signal no-10" for maritime ports and islands in Cox's Bazar and "great danger



signal no-8" for 11 other coastal districts. Signal 8, 9, and 10 means the storm has windspeeds over 90km/h. The signals differ to warn people about which side of a port the storm will pass.

GOVERNMENT PREPARATION
River traffic in the coastal areas and operation of planes in Chattogram

and Cox's Bazar have been suspended. Besides, educational institutions in the coastal districts were ordered to remain closed.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said, "Cyclone Mocha is coming. We have readied the cyclone centres and made all types of preparations."

Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management, said the surges may be 6 feet in Chattogram, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Barishal, Barguna, and Bhola.

Saint Martin's island, which faces the greatest risk, has 37 shelter centres with enough room for 8,500 people, he added. Some areas could see 200mm of rainfall, and landslides are a major risk in Rohingya camps.

At least 4,500 volunteers were working at refugee camps under the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, he said, acknowledging that evacuating 12 lakh Rohingyas to the cyclone centres was not possible.

Bibhishan Kanti Das, additional deputy commissioner at Cox's Bazar, said about 1.27 million people were evacuated by yesterday evening.

Over 4,000 people were taken to government buildings, hospitals, hotels and motels on St Martin's island.

Mujibur Rahman, chairman of St Martin's Union Parishad, said, "Our volunteers are bringing people to the cyclone shelters."

In Cox's Bazar town, a large number of people from Samitypara, Nazirartek and Kutubdiapara were evacuated,

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Rohingyas holding their breath

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar camps fear their homes may be destroyed if the Cyclone Mocha develops into a severe one and hits the coast.

"Our homes will not be able to stand the force of the cyclone if it is a severe one," said Abdul Amin, a resident of Balikhali Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya upazila.

He said the planned cyclone shelters may not be stronger than their homes.

Amin, who came to Bangladesh from a village near Maungdaw township in Myanmar in 2017, lives with his four-member family in a house made of bamboo and tarpaulin at the sub-camp 8 of Balukhali.

"If the cyclone is severe, we will lie on the ground together at a particular place," said a worried Amin.



Amir Ahmed, another Rohingya and a father of six, said his children asked him where would they go if the cyclone hits the camp. He told them that they would move to a shelter which is stronger than their shanty.

"Allah will save us all," he said.

Mohammad Islam, a sub-majhi (community leader) of camp-8, said, "The camp in charge directed us to move to safety if the cyclone is severe. I conveyed the message to our camp residents."

He said five families were at risk of landslides in his sub-camp and they will be evacuated, if necessary.

The Office of the Rohingya, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in a coordination meeting on May 11 decided to use the learning centres, women-friendly spaces, multipurpose centres,

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We won't buy from those who sanction us

Says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh will not purchase anything from countries that impose sanctions against the country.

"There is now a tendency to slap sanctions, and sanctions on those by whom we contain terrorism. We have made a decision. I have said that I will not buy anything from those who will impose sanctions," she said.

The prime minister said this while inaugurating the five-day long 60th Convention of Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at the IEB Headquarters with the theme "Innovative Engineering in the 4th Industrial Revolution".

"What will you do with me? My parents, brothers, and sisters have all been killed. I have nothing to lose. But I want to take my country forward," she said.

On December 10, 2021, the US Treasury Department slapped sanctions against Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and seven of its former and current officials alleging serious human rights violation.

Bangladesh has strongly denied the allegation and instead highlighted Rab's success in combating terrorism and drug menace.



A makeshift fruit market has sprung up on the dual-gauge railway lines recently laid in Khilhet as part of the Tongi-Kamalapur rail route. Authorities concerned appear to be doing nothing about it. The lines are still under construction and not yet operational. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

INDIAN OCEAN REGION US, Japan, Australia to invest more

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US, Japan and Australia are keen on engaging more with Bangladesh and the other Indian Ocean countries for investment and diplomatic purposes as the region holds huge economic potential but also faces the challenges of climate change and security.

Japan has rolled out a plan to support an industrial value chain centring Bangladesh's Matarbari deep sea port, said Takagi Kei, Japan's parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs, on the last day of the two-day Indian Ocean Conference in Dhaka yesterday.

Matarbari will be connected with the Southern Chattogram region and India's Northeast through roads, bridges and water lanes.

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