

# Cyclone: Orissa, India

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## *Information Bulletin N° 1*

### *The Disaster*

Howling 260 kph (155 mph) winds and 20- foot tidal waves flattened homes, trees and utility poles as the second deadly cyclone in a dozen days slammed into India's eastern coast. Orissa State has witnessed its second cyclone in the past 11 days. A severe cyclone with wind speeds of 240-260 km / hour struck the coastal areas of Orissa on 29 October. The storm which was located in the Bay of Bengal crossed the coast at 12 noon yesterday, approximately 600 km southeast of the port of Paradeep. It has since continued to move in a northwesternly direction.

The storm caused extensive damage in the districts of Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri and Bhubaneshwar. Indian Government sources predict that nearly 1 million people could be affected by the storm, described by meteorologists as a "super cyclone." All telephone lines in these districts are non-functional. Strong wind, sand, heavy windfall continue unabated. It is estimated that the cyclone will take 12 hours to weaken. In Delhi the federal Interior Minister L.K. Advani told Parliament on Friday that more than 100,000 houses were damaged. However, the exact details of the damage will not be known until tomorrow. Girdhar Gamang, the top elected official of Orissa state is quoted as saying that the "deaths will be not in tens, but in hundreds" (United News of India). The last cyclone that hit Ganjam and surrounding districts on 18 October left 115 persons dead, more than 1,500 injured, 700,000 people homeless, and caused extensive damage to property and infrastructure.

The alert for Bangladesh is now scaled down. The impact of the storm is also being felt in Myanmar where early reports indicate that 10 people were killed and as many as 20,000 families are homeless. More information on the flooding in Myanmar is forthcoming.

### *Government Action*

The State Government is still struggling to rehabilitate the victims of the previous cyclone in Ganjam, and the Indian Army was placed on alert to help with rescue and relief efforts. Officials say they already evacuated 50,000 people from low-lying coastal areas from the districts of Ganjam and Jagatsinghpur to safer places. A control room was set up by the State Government in Bhubaneshwar to co-ordinate the response to the disaster and to keep the district authorities posted on the latest developments. The West Bengal Government evacuated people from low-lying coastal areas on the Paradeep coast. Air force helicopters will begin dropping food packets on Saturday. Rescuers also plan to distribute food, vaccine and plastic sheeting to storm victims. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Cabinet is meeting in New Delhi today, Saturday, to assess the damage caused by the storm.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

Red Cross teams are already in the field, many still on location in response to the cyclone that occurred 12 days ago. Red Cross volunteers are assisting the local administration in evacuating people. Emergency food, shelter material and clothing are being provided to the affected people. The Indian Red Cross sent stocks of relief items from its zonal warehouse in Calcutta. The relief items include:

Blankets  
Emergency rations  
Assorted clothing  
Cloth sheeting  
Plastic sheeting Water purification tablets

Existing Red Cross cyclone shelters are also being used.

## ***Needs***

The Indian Red Cross has already sent to the area relief items valued at CHF 20,000. It is feared that the death toll is high and that term rehabilitation needs will be significant.

A joint Interanational Federation and Indian Red Cross assessment team is on its way to the affected area. The State Red Cross branches of Orissa and West Bengal are currently assessing the immediate needs. Additional information is still scarce. The Regional Delegation and the Indian Red Cross will provide more details as they become available.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Director  
Asia & Pacific Department

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