

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

INDIA: TRAIN CRASH

17 September 2002

Information Bulletin N° 2/2002

This information bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

The death toll in the train derailment in India's eastern state of Bihar on Monday night, 9 September, has risen to 112. Three days after the 2301 Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani Express crash, rescue workers were still working round the clock to extricate bodies trapped in the mangled coaches of the train. The body count is expected to reach 150 once everyone is accounted for.

The Delhi-bound luxury train, running at a normal speed of 120 to 130 km per hour from Kolkata, derailed on a bridge over the river Dhawe in Aurangabad district, Bihar. According to the railway authority, there were 526 passengers and 53 railway staff on board. Rescue efforts from the army, railway authorities and voluntary organisations continued in the pouring rain to recover bodies. On Wednesday, rescue workers cut open the last mangled coach.

Many victims' relatives have arrived at the accident site. At the Bihar's Rafiganj station, the railway authorities are trying to piece together information about the victims. More than 50 bodies have been handed over to relatives of victims after identification. The cause of the accident are still being investigated. The government has ordered a high-level inquiry.

Security has been tightened at all major stations of the division in northern and central Bihar. Track patrolling, usually carried out during monsoon, is also being intensified, especially at vulnerable places. Some passenger trains have been diverted following the crash. Normal traffic on the section will be resumed some time this week.

The Indian railway system is the largest in the world with over 62,600 km of track. Rail services are expanding though often at the cost of maintenance and repair. This accident is one of the biggest since 1995.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Indian Red Cross volunteers from Aurangabad were among the first to reach the site at 2:00 in the morning followed by their counterparts from the Gaya branch who arrived with an ambulance 30 minutes later. About 100 Red Cross volunteers made preparations to reach the accident site which falls in a remote area of Bihar, not easily accessible by road. They worked with the authorities to recover bodies trapped in the mangled carriages and provided first aid to the injured. Their rescue efforts were reinforced by a Red Cross team of doctors and

paramedic staff and 10 more volunteers from the Indian Red Cross Bihar state branch in Patna, 200 km from the site, on Tuesday morning followed by another assessment team later that afternoon.



Indian Red Cross staff and volunteers help in the return of bodies to relatives

The critically injured were carried to hospitals in Gaya, the nearest to the accident site while the others were moved to hospitals in Aurangabad, Rafiganj and Deh-i-on-Sone by the Red Cross volunteers in close coordination with the local administration. 50 Red Cross trained youths were mobilized by the Red Cross Aurangabad branch from the nearby village of Fesra. The volunteers donated blood and are providing food and medicine to the injured in Aurangabad and Rafiganj hospitals. They are also attending to the needs of the family members and attendants of the injured.

Meanwhile, the volunteers from the Gaya district branch were actively engaged in rescue, transferring the injured to hospitals, giving psychological support to family members of victims. A tracing service is also provided to help family members and friends of the victims to identify the dead and help search for survivors. Medicines and blood transfusion arrangements have also been provided to the Medical College Hospital and Railway Hospital in Gaya. Red Cross staff and volunteers from the Gaya branch are serving food to the victims admitted in the two hospitals. A first aid camp has also been set up providing round the clock service at the Gaya Red Cross Bhavan. The district branch will continue to provide these services as long as the situation demands.

The Red Cross branches have so far distributed 1,700 bottles of mineral water, 1,100 food packets, 50 mosquito nets, assorted clothes, blood, and medicines worth 60,000 India rupees to the train crash victims. Meanwhile, since the onset of the monsoon floods in July claiming at least 420 lives and leaving over 15 million people displaced in 24 districts across the state, hundreds of Red Cross volunteers have been mobilized to provide rescue and immediate relief to the flood victims. Relief operation in the form of food, shelter, family kits, water purification units and mosquito nets is still continuing in the most affected districts (see emergency appeal for India floods 2002).

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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