

# 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: CYCLONE

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*This 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*

Rescuers are searching for Indian and Bangladeshi fishermen missing after a deadly cyclone lashed coastal waters. The BBC reported that many people on small boats and trawlers are unaccounted for but authorities say they hope many have taken shelter and will soon make contact. West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya said on Thursday that 49 fishermen had died and 111 were still missing. Azimuzzaman Chowdhury, an administrator in Cox's Bazar, said: "The fate of the missing people is still unknown. The search for them will continue."

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) warned on 12 November that a severe cyclonic storm was imminent. Media reports said that people living in the coastal districts began hoarding food in anticipation of the cyclone as high waves, strong winds and rain lashed these areas. The local authorities hoisted a cautionary signal number 10 at Chandabali and danger signal number 8 was hoisted at Paradeep port and fishermen were warned against venturing out to the sea. The authorities also asked people living in the coastal districts of Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur to be ready to move to cyclone shelters, constructed after the super cyclone of 1999, if the need arose.

Balasore, Puri, Paradeep and some other coastal areas of Orissa are the most cyclone prone areas and take the brunt of the severe cyclonic storm every year. The cyclone usually weakens as it reaches West Bengal in its onward course to Bangladesh. When the cyclonic storm crossed West Bengal coast, south of its state capital, Kolkata, near Sagar islands on 12 November it showed signs of weakening. The cyclone affected four districts in the state-North and South 24 Parganas, Nadiya and East Midnapore. It also caused heavy rainfall and uprooted some trees in Kolkata. Trees were also uprooted in Puri port and Paradeep.

### *Red Cross/Red Crescent Action*

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) disaster management department at national headquarters contacted Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal state branches for situation reports. The IRCS summoned an emergency meeting of IRCS disaster management and relief officials, The Federation's disaster preparedness and relief officials and reporting team and participating National Societies (PNS) working in Orissa and West Bengal to assess the situation and plan rescue and relief in the affected areas.

An assessment team comprising experienced staff from IRCS's national headquarters, Orissa state branch and the Federation was put on standby to reach Kolkata in the event of the cyclone hitting the state capital. As Orissa branch has an experienced work force adept at dealing with cyclones after the major Orissa cyclone in 1999, it was decided to place on standby this workforce along with reasonably experienced volunteers of the Midnapore district branch of the West Bengal Red Cross. The West Bengal state branch has a trained member of the Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT), who was put on alert along with disaster experts working with the Spanish Red Cross (SRC) in Orissa.

An emergency meeting between the German Red Cross (GRC), the SRC and IRCS Orissa state branch took place to assess disaster response capacity and to keep in close contact with the local authorities. Both GRC and SRC have cyclone mitigation programmes in place in Orissa. People were put on alert and gradually moved to the GRC cyclone shelters (23 in all) in six coastal districts of Orissa by IRCS volunteers. The IRCS will construct 30 additional cyclone shelters with the help of the GRC. Other PNSs were also alerted.

The threat of the cyclone brought forth the disaster preparedness of IRCS volunteers in Orissa who have been receiving training in disaster preparedness and disaster relief by the IRCS and PNS such as the GRC and SRC. These volunteers are quick to alert communities and remove them to shelters and take precautions to minimize casualties.

A stock check of available relief goods from the IRCS warehouse in Kolkata's Salt Lake city was also taken. There are tarpaulins (2,000), blankets (2,000), kitchen sets (200) and mosquito nets (20,000). The need to bring in life jackets and boats for rescue operations in Kolkata was also discussed.

The IRCS is continuously monitoring the situation. The possibility of the cyclone hitting Orissa and West Bengal prompted the IRCS to put its new Disaster Management Centre (DMC) on a state of readiness. Following the cyclone threat, the DMC has already been equipped with an internet facility and will shortly have access to the Federation's disaster management information system (DMIS). The DMC will be linked to select state branches to facilitate information sharing and monitoring of emergency situation and relief work. The centre is currently staffed and equipped to monitor any emergency situation arising out of disasters.

***For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)***

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

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

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