

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

19 May 1997

Information Bulletin no. 1

Latest events

Further to the Alert of yesterday on the cyclone in Bangladesh, the following was reported by the BDRCS/Federation Delegation in Dhaka.

Overnight, the cyclone has changed the direction to the East and this afternoon, 19th May 1997, was heading close to the Cox's Bazar coast, latitude 21.5° North and longitude 91.5° East. It then, however, changed the direction and is now moving at a speed of approximately 20 kilometres per hour in a North North Easterly direction. Peripheral winds have already hit the coast and **the core of the cyclone which is approximately 100 kilometres in diameter is expected to cross the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar coast near Chittagong by evening today.** Four Unions within the Teknaf District, particularly Saint Martin's island, are currently experiencing flooding of between two and four feet of water in low lying areas with rain and squally winds of up to 200 kilometres per hour. Great danger signal number 10 continues to be hoisted.

The existing data on the cyclone indicates that it is getting rather close to the devastating cyclone which has killed 140,000 people in the Chittagong area in 1991.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

As of yesterday evening the BDRCS Cyclone Preparedness Programme volunteers have assisted approximately 500,000 persons to evacuate their homes and take cover in the cyclone shelters.

Three Delegates (Federation, Japanese and German RC) were dispatched this morning together with the BDRCS assessment team and two truckloads of emergency supplies to Cox's Bazar in order to assist with and monitor BDRCS activities in the area and to liaise with the BDRCS Branches and officers with a view to conducting damage assessment work after the cyclone has hit. Due to the sudden change of cyclone direction to the North, this BDRCS/Federation team was forced to stop its movement and take shelter en route. The team is reported to be in safe location and will resume its movement to the affected area as soon as weather conditions allow.

A cash provision has been allocated in the event that procurement of supplies is undertaken in the area. Tenders have been issued for chira (compressed rice), ghur (molasses), and iodised salt which would constitute an emergency five-day ration for one family. Preparations are being made for purchase of rice, lentils and soya bean oil which would be distributed in a second phase as a two-week ration for each affected family.

At BDRCS Headquarters a Disaster Response control room has been established in order to assess information received through the CPP network, from the government of Bangladesh, the Branches and other sources. The CPP staff at Headquarters continue to monitor the situation around the clock.

The BDRCS/Federation has planned to undertake aerial surveillance of the areas affected by the cyclone as soon as possible after the cyclone has dissipated in order to ensure rapid and accurate damage assessment. This will form the basis of an overall damage assessment, complemented by information from other sources.

The Secretariat will continue to keep the donors closely informed on further developments. Preliminary Appeal is likely to be issued tomorrow, 20 May 1997.

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