

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

26 September 1997

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The Impending Disaster

A cyclone of growing intensity is currently moving up the Bay of Bengal and is expected to cross the western coast of Bangladesh around 21h00 (CET) this evening. Earlier today it was centred some 630 km south-west of Chittagong Port, moving in a north-easterly direction, with wind-speeds of 75 kph and rising. Cyclone warning signal 6/7 was recorded a few hours ago and the sea is expected to remain very rough. Low lying areas of the Bangladeshi coast from Satkhira to Cox's Bazar and off-shore islands and chars (sand-banks) are likely to be inundated by a storm surge of 5-7 ft above normal tide.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Once again, the Bangladesh Red Crescent's renown cyclone preparedness programme - mainly comprising a network of 220 HF and VHF radio stations and some 27,000 volunteers - was rapidly into action, issuing early warning signals throughout the high risk area and evacuation-to-safety advice to the population on all off-shore island and low-lying coastal areas. The International Federation's Dhaka delegation is in close contact with counterparts in the Bangladesh Red Crescent and relevant Government ministries. The Secretariat's Asia Pacific Department will remain on stand-by throughout the weekend. For operational matters, Desk Officer Floyd Barnaby can be reached on 41-79-217-3306; any media enquiries should be directed to Marie-Francoise Borel on 41-79-416-3881.

Needs

Until the cyclone strikes and the extent of any damage assessed, it would be premature to provide a precise listing. However, from past experience - in the event of a significant humanitarian disaster brought on by the cyclone - cash for food (rice, lentils, oil), shelter (tents), water purification tablets and medicines (to counteract diarrhoea and water-borne diseases) could be urgently required; any procurement required will be carried out locally. With the weekend soon upon us, it is hoped that donors will take some preparatory action, should the need arise.

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