

BANGLADESH - CYCLONE

18 May 1997

SUMMARY

A severe cyclone is currently gathering intensity in the Bay of Bengal. The latest information from the Storm Warning Centre in Dhaka indicates that at 15.00 hours today, 18th May, the cyclone with a wind speed of up to 200 kilometres per hour was situated approximately 510 kilometres South West of Bangladesh, latitude 18° North and longitude 90° East. The cyclone is now moving at a speed of over 25 km per hour towards the Bangladesh coast. Should the course of the cyclonic storm remain stable, the landfall may hit the Megna river basin area between 24.00 hours and 06.00 hours tomorrow, 19th May, although prediction of the exact path and speed is impossible at this point.

A storm surge of up to 12 feet above normal tide with strong winds and heavy rainfall are expected in the coastal districts. Low lying and densely populated areas and off-shore islands are likely to be inundated.

Great danger signals number eight to ten have been hoisted. The BDRCS Cyclone Preparedness Programme volunteers and staff have therefore entered the evacuation phase. BDRCS has prepared for a major relief operation.

RED CROSS / RED CRESCENT ACTION

All the Cyclone and Disaster Preparedness systems of the BDRCS and the Federation Delegation have been activated. The following actions have been taken so far:

- The BDRCS Health Department has commenced organisation of six medical teams with equipment and medicines. It is expected that three medical teams will be ready for operational duty within 24 hours and a further three teams within 48 hours.
- The Relief Department has organised two relief teams with two 30 ton trucks and two pick-ups for deployment immediately following damage assessment with relief supplies from stock. A further four 10 ton trucks are to be made available at short notice for immediate response. A joint BDRCS/Federation reporting and communications team has been established to include media statement preparations.
- The Delegation has made "line of credit" arrangements with the Chittagong Bank to provide for possible local purchase of relief supplies.

- All Delegates including Bilateral Delegates are in a state of alert with defined roles.
- A meeting was held on 18th May with the Secretary of the Ministry of Relief, the Director of the Disaster Management Bureau, the Meteorological Office Director and concerned management and staff of BDRCS and the Delegation. Coordination of disaster response actions with the BDRCS was discussed.
- The Acting Secretary General has attended the inter-ministerial co-ordination meeting at the Cabinet Office at 16.30 hours today.
- BDRCS coastal Unit (Branch) Officers currently under training in Dhaka are returning immediately for disaster response work in their Districts.

The Federation Secretariat has authorised the Delegation to commit up to CHF 200,000 against Disaster Response Emergency Fund allocation in order to provide immediate response, should the situation require so.

Secretariat will keep the National Societies closely informed on further developments.

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