

A Doctor in Neelganj

A first hand report on the National Problem

Ravi Narayan

A long winding canal with lazy fishing boats moored on its banks, long monotonous rows of thatched bamboo huts covered with black foreign polythene, men, women and children of all sizes and descriptions with grim, despairing faces walking around, working or standing in long, never-ending queues—slush, dirt and disease everywhere—these were the first impressions we got on arrival at Neelganj camp for Bangla Desh refugees. The camp was situated about 26 miles out of Calcutta on the main road between Barasat

and Barrackpore on the outskirts of Neelganj village. The journey from Bangalore to this out of the way camp in 24 Paraganas district had been a mixed fare. A short comfortable spell on the Brindavan, a long strenuous trip on the Howrah mail and an interesting but bumpy ride on some of India's worst roads and finally we were there.

Ever since we entered Bengal by train, what struck us most was the number of people everywhere. People in the villages, at the level crossings, in the fields on the platforms. On reaching



Can their hearts be cured? Medical facilities have been amply provided at the refugee camps to comfort the refugees and counter the spread of epidemics.



Not wanted in their Country. The inflow of Bangla Desh refugees into India has been unprecedented. Nearly two million refugees have already sought shelter on Indian soil.

Calcutta this was even more obvious. We saw the famous pavement dwellers of Calcutta and people hanging out of trams and buses, the usual processions, trains arriving and leaving Howrah station packed to capacity. Everywhere people and only people even as one picked up the daily newspaper and read of 7.5 million more people having entered into Eastern India. The numbers were frightening.

It took us about a day to survey the camp and judge for ourselves what the problems of the people were and decide what we could do to solve them. The camp commandant informed us that there were about 5-6,000 refugees (at a conservative estimate) with the numbers increasing every day. This was one of the base camps and more and more refugees hearing of the better facilities available were making their way to Neelganj. The government had provided all the families with shelters in the form of thatched bamboo huts covered with polythene—making it as water proof as practically possible. The floors were raised ledges of clay or bricks. Many of the refugees had a few cooking pots while others had been supplied some by the government. Rations were being supplied weekly, these consisting of rice, pulses, vegetables, spices, oil and firewood. CARITAS the organisation which had sponsored us had distributed mats and clothes to most of the families and started a milk distribution programme. A government health unit with provisions for inoculations and vaccinations and medicines for headaches) had been functioning here with poor results.

We started our dispensary the next day—literally from scratch. For all that we had were a few boxes of medicine and simple equip-

ment and four minds brimming with ideas. We held an out-patient clinic with what facilities we had and there were nearly 300 patients the first day. We saw them all—diarrhoeas and dysenteries of every kind, pneumonias, tuberculosis, malnutrition among the children, measles and whooping cough, skin diseases of all types, wounds and ulcers and even a few bullet wounds. It was an exciting experience since at the end of the first day we had got a taste of what we were going to expect for the next two months.

Slowly and steadily we improved our dispensary—within a week we had an out-patient section, a pharmacy, a dressing section. In another week's time we opened a small temporary hospital with arrangements for intravenous fluid administration. Meanwhile we started an injection section. A few days later we began conducting deliveries and within a fortnight we had become a full-fledged primary health centre. The queues were never-ending and each evening we had to close at 6 p.m. not because the patients had decreased but because we had no arrangements to continue seeing them in the dusk. At first, we took the help of some brothers from the seminary where we had been put up to converse with the people—but within a fortnight language was no barrier. With broken Bengali interspersed with a little Hindi and a number of signs we managed to get the meaning across.

The people were mostly illiterate peasants with a few intellectuals scattered among them. To many, seeing a doctor was a novel experience. To many others the rules of hygiene we preached appeared quaint and impractical—yet we were persistent and soon they began to learn and understand. One of us used to visit the huts daily to see the very sick and the disabled and to direct some of the others to

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“What have we done to deserve this fate”? Women and children have been unfortunate victims of the large scale massacre. They have been accosted, abused, injured and insulted.



Every day is a rainy day. The long, never ending queue of the refugees for bread and milk. Our countrymen have at last come forward to aid the refugees with food, clothing and money.

our dispensary. This gave us an opportunity to see for ourselves their living conditions and become familiar with their habits and social customs. On these visits we would come across little children swinging on makeshift swings, little groups of refugees gathered round a village musician singing his *baols* and twanging on the *ektara*, or listening to a reading of our epics or some other mythological book. We saw men hard at work making fishing nets or splitting bamboo for fishing traps. We learnt that a majority of them were peasants who supplemented their income by fishing in the numerous rivers and streams of their homeland. We were naturally very keen to hear their versions of the present crisis. Some

were keen on sharing their experiences; others were reticent perhaps with sorrow. We met old ladies who had been separated from their families during the long exodus and were now living off the charity of their neighbours. We saw orphans and widows. We heard of families killed or separated. We heard of the shooting of innocent people, burning and looting of houses — a hundred first hand repetitions of newspaper reports and stories. We visited the borders and saw for ourselves the amazing exodus—young and old, able and disabled—people with a will to live making strenuous journeys, eyes full of pain and despair with here and there a ray of hope at the thought of having reached India. India

was their refuge, their new home—in fact, at that point, everything to them.

The first few weeks we regarded them just as a large mass of unlucky humanity but as days went by we came to know them better. They had their idiosyncrasies and their foolish superstitions. They were irregular in their treatment and often did not follow instructions. Some were over-enthusiastic; others were plain lazy. Some were demanding; others unassuming. Above all, we found them to be human.

We shall never forget the night the young men of the camp invited us to a concert of folk songs. We were with them for over two hours, not as doctors and patients but as one large family lost for a short while in the strains of rural music oblivious to the suffering that was their lot. They showed their gratitude in many other ways. They tried offering us part of their rations. They invited us to their homes and often helped us with our work in little ways to show their appreciation.

A month slipped by and soon the second month was coming to an end and we began wondering what the experience had meant to us. It was time to leave and we realised that we had really come to enjoy it. The thought of leaving all those people, whose health and

lives had been temporarily in our hands, was uppermost in our minds.

If each one of us has that streak of Tom Dooley and Albert Schweitzer, then this experience had brought us in contact with it. We had come with the idea of helping these people. We were leaving with a sense of gratitude to them for giving us an opportunity to find ourselves and discover a true sense of fulfilment.

(Continued from page 9)

month is given at the Film Institute at Poona provided that the candidate is receiving no other financial assistance and that he signs a bond to serve the Government for 2 years.

- 3) Some scholarships are calculated to ridicule unity and integration—eg. Rs. 50 per month awarded specially to students who take Kannada as their main subject. There is no need to mention similar scholarships for those who take up Hindi.
- 4) Scholarships for the physically handicapped (blind, deaf, dumb) is all of a *grand* Rs. 15 per month! And, subject to an age limit of 18 years!



Will she survive? Families have been broken—lost and dead.

reading

PUNE JOURNAL OF CONTINUING HEALTH EDUCATION. An educational publication presenting scientific information and opinion on controversial health and drugs issues for health personnel. Subscription Rs 10 from: Arogya Dakshata Mandal, 1913 Sadashiv Peth, Pune 411030.

MEDICO FRIENDS CIRCLE BULLETIN. Deals with some of the burning issues related to health care and its delivery systems and services. Very relevant for all personnel involved in health work or concerned about health issues. Subscription Rs 15 from: Dr Anant Phadke, Convenor, Medico Friends Circle, 50 LIC Qtrs, University Road, Pune 411 015.

DRUGS BULLETIN. An informative monthly giving unbiased technical information on drugs and therapeutics. Recommended for health personnel. The latest issue deals with 'Drugs for Primary Health Care'. Annual Subscription Rs 10 from: Dr V S Mathur, Editor, Drugs Bulletin, Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh.

HAI NEWS. Bimonthly service of HAI Clearing House from the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of IOCU. Subscription \$ 10 from IOCU, P.O.Box 1045 Penang, Malaysia.

THE MEDICAL LETTER on Drugs and Therapeutics is published from 56 Harrison Street, New Rochelle, New York 10801. This monthly publication, edited by Mark Abramowicz M.D., is aimed at medical and health personnel. Founded in 1959 by Arthur Kallet and Herold Aaron it provides updated information on a number of drugs issues.

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS AND INDIA'S DRUG INDUSTRY. A brief six page note prepared by Dr. Debabar Banerjee, Professor, Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU, New Delhi 110067.

INTERNATIONAL CODES AND YOU. This is a reprint published by the Voluntary Health Association of India containing the IFPMA code, a critique of the IFPMA code by HAI and the HAI Draft International Code for Pharmaceuticals.

ANABOLIC STEROIDS. A report by the IOCU analysing the dangers of anabolic steroids, the medical literature, the marketing practices, etc. For those interested, copies can be obtained by us from IOCU.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR CHANGE. Health Action International's Guide to Rational Health Projects by Virginia Beardshaw, Published by HAI and IOCU (see detailed description on Pg.16). The original price is Rs. 68. A request for a 30% discount for the Drug Action Network has been very kindly granted.

HEALTH FOR THE MILLIONS - SPECIAL ISSUE ON DIARRHOEA is now available with VHAI. The articles emphasise the role of ORT and nutrition in diarrhoea and include detailed schemes for the correct management of diarrhoeal diseases.

BETTER DIARRHOEA CARE. Part of the Better Care series being published by the Voluntary Health Association of India, this booklet which was earlier printed in English is now available in Marathi and Gujarathi. For orders please contact VHAI.

Standing up to cyclone havoc

THE severe cyclonic storm from the Bay of Bengal that hit the coastal districts of Bangladesh on April 29-30, 1991 and killed an estimated two lakhs people was similar to the one that devastated the same area on November 11-12, 1970 and wrought the same degree of havoc.

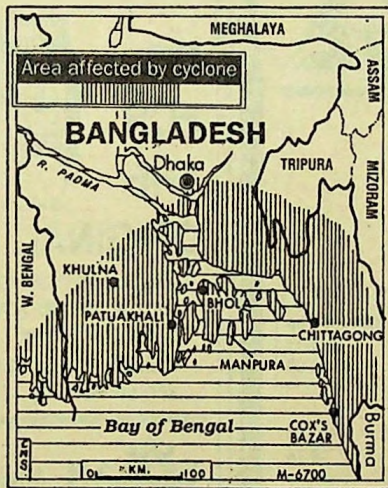
At the request of the Government of Pakistan that was ruling East Pakistan the U.N. General Assembly directed the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to do the needful and the WMO Congress appointed in April 1971 a committee of eight international technical experts including one from Bangladesh, under the chairmanship of this writer who was a vice-president of the WMO at that time.

The committee studied the problem and submitted its report to WMO in 1973. A tropical cyclone project was prepared by the WMO for adoption by cyclone-prone countries all over the world. The Government of India and the Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal appointed the cyclone distress mitigation committee (CDMC) for the coastal States under the chairmanship of the writer during 1970-75 and action was initiated to implement their recommendations.

The WMO set up an inter-governmental panel of experts from countries subject to tropical cyclones over the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The panel meets periodically to review the arrangements for the rapid exchange of cyclone warnings between the countries concerned and updated actions taken by their Governments to educate the public in the coastal districts and to equip the district authorities fully prepared to protect the people from the cyclones before, during and after their onslaught.

The last meeting held in Bangladesh was in Dhaka in 1989. As protection of lives and property during and after cyclones is one of the most important responsibilities of the WMO it has a permanent programme to advise needy member-countries.

Tropical cyclones over the Bay of Bengal occur in two distinct seasons, the pre-monsoon



soon months of April-May and the post-monsoon months of October-November. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had published the tracks of the cyclones since 1891 and updates them every year in its quarterly scientific journal, "Mausam". As 90 per cent of the deaths in severe cyclones all over the world occur in high storm surges accompanying them the only feasible method to save the lives of human beings

and animals is to evacuate them to safe inland cyclone shelters as early as possible after the receipt of advance cyclone warnings from the Meteorological Department. The evacuation of people is difficult in flat coastal districts as in Bangladesh where the tides of six to 10 metres above the sea level submerges offshore islands and travels inland for considerable distances.

Soon after the liberation of Bangladesh, its first Prime Minister, Mujibur Rahman, requested India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to depute a team of experts on water management for mutual discussions and the latter sent a delegation to Dhaka under the leadership of Dr. K. L. Rao, the then Minister for Irrigation and Power. As a member of the delegation and Director-General of IMD this writer was requested to prepare a cyclone disaster mitigation plan for Bangladesh which was done in collaboration with Mr. Mowla, the then Director of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, and a report was submitted to their Government Mujibur Rahman was impressed upon the primary need to evacuate the people from the offshore islands to inland locations by providing them with boats. As severe cyclones hit once in five or 10 years it should not be very difficult to collect and store enough boats for evacuation of all island dwellers or insist upon the families living on the islands to have their own boats for protection and evacuation.

The present decade has been designated by the U.N. as the "Decade of Natural Hazard Reduction — DNHR" and a world congress on the subject was to be held in New Delhi in February 1991, but it has been postponed to January 1992. With the cooperation of specialised agencies like the WMO, the U.N. Environmental Programme (UNEP),

the U.N. Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO), etc., it will be possible to update the world tropical cyclone project and save lives and property in natural disasters all over the world.

Some environmentalists have speculated that the rise in the sea level in the recent cyclone might have been due to global warming. Although global warming of the atmosphere due to the increase in pollution by industries and agriculture has occurred all over the world, its magnitude is small — about half a degree Celsius and it may take a few more decades to produce a general rise in the sea level owing to the melting of polar ice-caps. The natural rise in the sea level owing to high tides and storm surges in tropical cyclones have always to be taken care of and the people and animals shifted to safe zones before they are drowned by storm surges.

It is essential that ships at sea should monitor cyclone warnings issued every three hours by IMD by radio, avoid entering the eyes of cyclones and save their passengers from the harrowing experience of the ship, M.V. Najd-II in the recent cyclone. Mariners at sea have serious responsibilities to save the passengers in their ships similar to those of administrators of coastal districts in the matter of protection of the people from the cyclones. In the pre-monsoon months of April-May, Norwesters locally called 'Kal Baishakis', accompanied by severe tornadoes devastate several districts of Bangladesh and north-eastern India frequently and seriously hamper relief operations. These will have to be taken care of by the governments concerned.

P. Koteswaram

Retd. Director-General of Observatories

Khaleda may seek more aid from Saudi Arabia

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 26.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, whose first foreign trip was to New Delhi to attend the funeral of Rajiv Gandhi, is now in the Saudi Arabia's capital at the start of her first official visit abroad. She was given a rousing reception by the Saudi monarch.

Begum Zia's current five-day visit to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE has amply demonstrated her government's keen desire to expand bilateral ties between Bangladesh and the Islamic Ummah. The "goodwill visit" by Begum Zia to the three Arabian countries was earlier postponed twice due to cyclone and tidal surge.

Some of the Arabian countries, especially the Saudi Arabia, responded generously to her call for help to face the recent calamity. Riyadh gave \$ 106 millions as relief assistance topping the list of nations that gave assistance to Bangladesh in the wake of the cyclone. During her talks with King Fahd and other high ranking Saudi leaders, informed circles said, she is expected to invite greater Arabian assistance to rebuild Bangladesh's economy.

While meeting the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Mr. Hamid Al-Gabid, in Jeddah on Saturday, the Bangladesh Prime Minister was categorical that her Government would follow the policies of her husband, late President Gen. Zia-ur-Rahman, who first established special relations with the Arabian monarchs after the independence of the country in 1971.

Coping with natural calamities

WHEN the Indian Science Congress Association chose "Coping with Natural Disasters" as the focal theme for its Indore session held in January this year it would have least imagined that so soon thereafter the closest neighbour of India, Bangladesh, would be hit with the worst-ever cyclone, resulting in loss of nearly a million lives besides extensive damage to property.

Nor would the World Health Organisation (WHO) have expected this within a month of its celebration of the World Health Day on April 7 with the main slogan: "Should Disaster Strike — Be Prepared". The declaration by the United Nations of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) prompted the two organisations to draw the attention of the world to the ways of tackling natural disasters and the holocaust in Bangladesh seems to provide, as it were, a live demonstration of the various issues raised and debated at these two fora.

According to WHO data, there has been a marked increase in the disaster situation over the years. The number of disasters during a 60-year period between 1900 and 1960 totalled 4,098, whereas in a much shorter span of 30 years from 1960 to 1989, the number totalled 3,380. Regionwise figures show that eastern Mediterranean accounted for 312 events in the first 60 years of the current century and 281 in the next 30 years. The corresponding figures for Europe were 495 and 384; for South East Asia 645 and 560; Western Pacific 748 and 598; Africa 850 and 734 and America 1048 and 823.

Even though south-east Asia region ranks only fourth among the most disaster-prone regions in the world, the high density of population in the region is found to result in the disaster effects being felt by the largest number of people. For instance, during the devastating floods of Bangladesh in 1988 at least 25 million people were reported to have lost their homes.

Within the south-east Asian region, Bangladesh had faced over 100 disasters of various types. Of these, cyclone had hit 32 times, taking a toll of four lakh lives and injuring six lakhs and affecting 26 millions. Floods had hit 22 times affecting 190 million

people. The other disasters included accidents, drought, epidemic, earthquake, fire, landslide and storm. During this period, India was hit by 191 natural disasters, Indonesia 142, Nepal 27 and Thailand 26. Concerned over the situation, the WHO had organised inter-regional meetings on disaster preparedness for health planners and taken steps to strengthen the efforts of member-countries in the region in disaster preparedness, as it is admitted that natural disasters cannot be prevented, but only their impact mitigated.

Recorded history and mythology are peppered with natural disasters. The present century has added a new ecological dimension to the definition of disaster. Chemical and nuclear catastrophes, oil spills, pollution of air, water and soil, desertification and the greenhouse effect have all driven home the simple truth that development can be destructive. As a WHO spokesman noted on the occasion of the World Health Day last month, if the last Ice Age brought about the biggest climatic changes in human history, now the world is awakening to the prospects of global weather getting changed by human activities.

The build-up of carbon dioxide and other heat trapping gases in the atmosphere — which is known as the Greenhouse Effect — may bring about truly catastrophic consequences, from prolonged drought to a rise in the sea level. If the latter happens, low lying cities such as Bangkok, Calcutta, Dhaka, Hanoi, Karachi and Shanghai, among the most densely populated and sprawling habitats in the world, would be under water. This warning was given by the WHO on the occasion of the World Health Day in April this year.

At the Indore Science Congress, a Canadian-based Indian scientist, Dr. T. S. Murthy, had stated that the Greenhouse Effect would not only raise the mean sea level, but also intensify cyclones, generating even greater storm surges. In fact, he predicted that very strong tropical cyclones, referred to as hypercanes with central pressure as low as 800 mb might occur. Currently, the lowest observed central pressure in a tropical cyclone is 870 mb.

The vulnerability of Bangladesh has been

often highlighted. Lying in the delta of the mighty rivers — the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna — with their 230 km wide mouths, it faces floods as regular annual events. One that hit it in 1988 was then deemed to be the worst in living memory. As a result, low countries in the region, Bangladesh suffers from storm surges from the Bay of Bengal crushing everything in sight. The cyclone in 1970 had a toll of two lakhs lives besides millions of stock. In May 1985 there was a devastating cyclone on the southern coast of Bangladesh, wiping out the entire coastal island with over 11,000 lives.

But repeated natural disasters test the resilience of the community. Mr. Mohamed Fazl, Assistant Secretary to the *Bangladesh Times* claimed on the occasion of World Health Day in April this year that an official of the Directorate of Health Services as saying, "If a cyclone strikes now we are in better position to handle it". He would least have imagined that in less than a month a disaster would strike and test the community's preparedness to tackle it.

A model plan of action for relief and rehabilitation had been drawn up for the upazilas in Bangladesh and if successful it will be replicated in other parts of the world that have been identified as most vulnerable to disasters. The selected countries are to be included in the network of disaster preparedness strategy at the multi-sectoral and national levels. Besides this, a 15-point short and long-term plan has been drawn up to mitigate and prevent the effects of disasters. These include dredging of rivers, improvement of flood warning systems, construction of embankments and shifting of houses to higher lands and modernisation of country boats. The community is being sensitized to disaster preparedness and basic techniques to deal with emergencies. Mr. Fazl had claimed. How effective these measures have been in preventing a cyclone is yet to be assessed.

As the Presidential Address of the President of the Indore Science Congress there has been no dearth of emphasis on disaster mitigation, preparedness and response at various levels. But

US force to leave Bangla in June

Dhaka, May 22 (PTI): The United States task force, engaged in "Operation Sea Angel" relief mission and enjoying diplomatic immunity under a memorandum of understanding signed with Bangladesh Government, would leave the country in the middle of June, press reports said.

"We have no plan to increase the number of troops. We haven't come here to stay," task force commander Maj Gen Henry Stackpole now in Chittagong was quoted by Bengaly Daily Sangbad as saying.

Stackpole's statement comes three days after a newspaper said 11,000 more US troops would arrive in Bangladesh in the second phase of the relief operation to join the 7,000 marine troops now providing relief to millions of hungry and homeless in coastal areas and offshore islands.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Abdul Ahsan said after signing the MOU that the task force would stay here as long as the Government wanted them to. He, however, did not specify the period.

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The Hindu 20.5.91

Legal cover for U.S. presence in Bangladesh

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 19.

Washington and Dhaka will soon sign an agreement to facilitate the operation of the U.S. task force in the cyclone-hit areas of Bangladesh. The task force is already in Chittagong and the proposed agreement will give a "legal cover" for the Americans' presence.

Foreign Ministry sources said the agreement would determine the areas of work by the U.S. troops and their duration of stay. It would also provide details of the operation by the nearly 8,000 troops, mostly marines, in the cyclone-battered areas. An estimated 2,00,000 people died and the houses of lakhs of others were destroyed.

Brig. Shafat Ahmed, Director of Operation and Planning, Supreme Command headquarters, told media persons that the task force had brought 30 helicopters. It would set up 36 water purifying plants, each with a capacity to produce 12,000 gallons of drinking water.

Protest in Dhaka

UNI, DPA & PTI report:

On Saturday, opposition activists and freedom fighters staged demonstrations in the capital in protest against the presence of the U.S. troops in the southern region. The demonstrations were organised by the Muktijoddah Sanghati Parishad (MSP), an organisation of freedom fighters and pro-left Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal.

Addressing the demonstrators, Col. (Rtd) Sawkat Ali, M.P. and leader of the MSP, said the presence of the U.S. troops in the name of relief operations threatened the country's independence and sovereignty.

On the Sandwip island, hundreds of people danced and banged their empty pots and pans to welcome the U.S. marines, who arrived there with food and medical supplies. The marines transported more than 200 tonnes of relief goods by helicopter.

Diarrhoea toll: Diarrhoea deaths in the cyclone-affected areas rose from 381 to 624, an official spokesman said on Saturday night.

Reports from the Sandwip island said more people died of the epidemic. The total number of people affected by diarrhoea in the cyclone-hit areas rose to 131,549.

'No coordination': Mr. Saidur Rahman, local head of the British charity Oxfam, said there was an utter lack of coordination among different government agencies. "Nobody seems to realise the urgency of the situation," an aid official said. A French relief plane had been forced to sit on the tarmac for three days before it was allowed to unload its cargo.

The delay and the apparent confusion stem from a dual administration that has been running the country since the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, took over in March following the general elections. The interim President, Mr. Shababuddin Ahmed, is the constitutional head, while Begum Zia enjoys greater moral authority since her Bangladesh Nationalist Party is the largest group in Parliament.

Diplomats say the dual administration is complicated by the presence of the army, which wields considerable influence on national politics. The airport is controlled by the civil aviation, the customs and the military, and when a relief plane arrives it takes a long time to find out who is in charge, several agencies complained.

A government spokesman, Mr. Manzur-e-Moula, said goods worth over \$341 million dollars had reached the country. He admitted the problem, saying the airport was already stretching its facilities. Opposition members in Parliament alleged that relief goods were surfacing in the markets. They said corrupt airport and customs officials were being bribed by traders to coax them into selling the goods.

Rain submerges shelters

DHAKA, May 19.

Thirty-one flood shelters in northeastern Bangladesh were submerged as rain pounded most of the country overnight. There was an acute shortage of drinking water as most of the water pumps were also submerged.

"The situation in Balaganj sub-district is grave as it is in the middle of the Surma and Kushiara rivers, which have burst their banks following the heavy downpour and runoff from the Garo hills in neighbouring India.

More than half of the tea-growing Sylhet town was under water and telecommunication was severed, causing hardship to the flood victims. Some families were living on small boats — AFP

Mr. Nathan, 64, said. — Reuter, EFE-PTI, IRNA

Fresh storm kills 25 in Bangladesh

DHAKA, May 20.

A fresh storm lashed Bangladesh's cyclone-battered coast, killing at least 25 people, injuring up to 500 and destroying homes and crops, officials said today. The storm struck on Sunday evening at a speed of 192 km an hour flattening thousands of homes, uprooting trees, disrupting power supplies and destroying crops. "Losses are widespread. Corrugated sheets torn from roofs were blown away like paper and trees were lifted hundreds of metres from the ground," one official said.

"This has added to the country's unending tragedy," said an official at Gournado, one of the worst-hit areas. The other badly-affected area was Agoiljhara, part of the densely populated Barisal coastal district.

Villagers told reporters in Barisal that more than 50 had been killed in Sunday's storm and at least 1,000 were injured. The official BSS news agency said 90 per cent of homes and 70 per cent of rice and other crops were destroyed. Meteorologists said that major rivers in the area, including the Kushiara and Khowai, were dangerously high and incessant rain overnight had submerged more areas.

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, is planning a four-day tour of Saudi Arabia and two other West Asian countries from May 25 to explain the magnitude of the disaster and discuss aid, Government sources said today. — Reuter.

A BANGLADESH

May 19, 1991

Life five feet above the

IN 1970, half a million people died after a cyclone brought floods to Bangladesh. Last month, the toll topped 100,000. In the intervening 20 years, many thousands of others have been swept out to sea.

In a country which is already among the poorest of the poor, those who have died have been the most destitute. They were vulnerable to the elements in this way because they were so poor: there was nowhere else in Bangladesh for them to go. The increasing cruelty of the climate which surrounded them was only one of the hazards of life they have been forced to accept.

By Michael Simmons

But as this week's death toll mounts and the suffering of the survivors intensifies, the expectation is growing among Western experts that disasters on this scale in the Bay of Bengal must be counted more rather than less likely in the next few years.

"By the end of the next century," said the New York-based Worldwatch Institute in its last State of the World report, "Bangladesh as it is known today may virtually have ceased to exist."

According to United Nations estimates, nearly 20 million people — one in six or more of the population — living on about

15 per cent of the land area are threatened with "total inundation" if the sea level rises by five feet. Another 10 million would be affected if the rise were in the region of 10 feet. The tidal wave, driven by last month's cyclone, was 20 feet high.

But large areas of Bangladesh — roughly 80 per cent of the total land mass — are only five feet or less above the surrounding sea level. An additional problem is that coastal storm erosion in the delta area is more risk-laden than almost anywhere else in the world.

THE number of people at risk, and the risk itself, intensify as global warming causes the sea level to rise. "This means," says Dick Warrick, at East Anglia University's climatic research unit, "that future tidal waves will come from a higher sea level and will therefore submerge more land. This is a possibility that needs to be taken very seriously."

Worldwatch says the greenhouse effect means that the earth's average temperature will go up by 5 degrees Centigrade or more over the next 100 years. The global sea level is rising at the rate of about an inch every 20 years, and the warmer the sea, the greater its volume. Huge masses of water flowing into the Bay of Bengal from the Ganges,



Hands of the famished reach for airdrops in worst hit cyclone area

the Brahmaputra and other rivers, add to the dangers of the Bangladeshis' situation.

The Bay of Bengal, says Mr. Warrick, is a perfect funnel for any winds which drive the sea northwards. Cox's Bazaar and Chittagong and the offshore islands in this area are where these winds, and the accompanying tidal wave, first hit land. Cyclones can be expected as the sea temperature rises in the context of a severe tropical depression.

But why, it may be asked, do so many people die when the disaster is more or less predictable? The answer, according to Allister McGregor, lecturer in development studies at Bath University, is poverty. Two-thirds of the people of Bangladesh live below the World Health Organisation poverty line, and half the rural population do not get enough to eat.

At the same proportion of landless and are landless: their own gravitated those places been deposited have formed are no dispute

"These 1 McGregor, rest, and the risk. It is li precipice. I they are the highest price

He adds tense awarer total inability do anything constrained, own poverty

THE rural helped much of "assistance"



Ships dumped on the shore by wind

UNI/AFP photos

U.S. team is non-combatant, says *Hindu* Bangladesh Foreign Office *17.5.91*

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 16.

An unspecified number of marines of the U.S. has arrived on the Chittagong coast of Bangladesh to begin their work in the cyclone and tidal surge battered areas. A Foreign Office spokesman said today that the U.S. task force was expected to stay in Bangladesh for two weeks when it would provide emergency relief assistance to the people. Many political parties and student organisations have protested the presence of the U.S. marines in the country's coastal areas.

In an apparent response to parliament discussion and condemnation by a section of the Opposition, the Foreign Office explained that although the task force, the biggest foreign troops to land in Bangladesh so far would stay here for about two weeks a wing of the water purification unit and the small helicopters would stay back to continue relief operations.

The Commander of the force, Gen. Stackpole, who visited the cyclone affected areas on Tuesday along with the American Ambassador and the Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Nooruddin Khan, said that colossal damage was done to the infrastructure in the Chittagong coastal belt. He said his force was moving to Chittagong to install their "operation base" from where five military helicopters would be operating in carrying relief goods.

The Bangladesh Foreign Office explained that the task force which is of brigade strength comprises two big ships including the Tarawa and six following ships. The Tarawa has 27 helicopters and several landing crafts which have a remarkable movement capacity in areas battered by cyclone. About 250 of the task force will work on the shore while the rest will stay in the mother ship and come for relief work when required. The mother ship will remain in the international waters 40 km from the shore somewhere between Cox's Bazar and Kutubdia.

The Foreign Office also said that the members of the team and those who would work on the shore would not carry any arms and are essentially non-combatant. The advance team compris-

ing 29 members were expected to leave after two weeks. Those who would stay back to continue relief operations include five "black hawk" small helicopters which could ferry 6,000 pounds in each sortie.

The U.S. General explained that his task force comprised mainly engineers and communication experts in uniform as they were drawn from defence services which were engaged in the Gulf war. When a newspaper correspondent asked him about the period of their stay in Bangladesh, the U.S. General paused for a while and said "In the next few weeks time I think they can recover." Gen. Stackpole said he would work in cooperation with both the U.S. Ambassador in Dhaka and the Bangladesh Army.

Former P.M. arrested

AFP reports:

The police arrested here on Thursday the former Prime Minister, Mr. Kazi Zafar Ahmed, who was in hiding since the President, Mr. Hussain Mohammad Ershad's ouster in December, witnesses said. Mr. Ahmed, who won a parliamentary seat in the February general elections while in hiding to evade arrest, was picked up by the police this morning near the parliament building in central Dhaka.

Bangladesh opposition party objects to U.S. marine presence Hindu 16.5.41

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 15.

In an effort to tackle the recurrent cyclone problem the Bangladesh Government has decided to construct multipurpose buildings in the coastal and cyclone-prone offshore areas of the country to be used as shelters during the calamity and warehouses of emergency relief materials.

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, says that in normal times these buildings will be used as schools and hospitals, but they will hold sufficient stock of food and medicines so that relief operations could be launched soon after disaster strikes. The Prime Minister has sought international assistance in making this gigantic programme a success.

Soldiers not needed: A section of the Opposition has strongly criticised the Government for inviting the U.S. marines in the name of relief work while there was no protest from the mainstream Opposition. The Central leader of the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), a partner of the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, Mr. Abdur Razzak, sees some foul play in the arrival of the U.S. marines in the coastal belt. He has demanded a "clear cut explanation" of the Government on the deployment of foreign troops. Mr. Razzak said that Bangladesh needed aid and assistance, but not the soldiers. "We have our own people and soldiers, we don't need the Americans," said other organisations including the Muslim Chhatra League.

The U.S. Task Force Commander General, Mr. Stackpole, met the Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, on Tuesday and explained to him the purpose and method of operation of their relief mission, which will be concentrated in the Chittagong area. Justice Shahabuddin appreciated the "good gesture and assistance" so quickly offered by the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush. It is learnt that the U.S. military delegation will formulate phase-wise programme for relief and rehabilitation.

Return from Saudi Arabia: The first batch of more than 400 officers and troops of Bangladesh military contingent returned home from Saudi Arabia in the early hours of Tuesday. Welcoming

the officers and troops at a reception arranged at the airport, Begum Khaleda Zia, said the nation was proud of their role and performance in the defence of the holy land.

Speaker allays fears

PTI reports.

The Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament, Mr. Abdur Rahman Biswas told the House today that the country's sovereignty would not be undermined by the presence of the U.S. troops, which had arrived to carry out relief operations in the cyclone-affected areas.

Mr. Rashed Khan Menon, a member of the Workers' Party, said the issue was very serious in view of the fact that the U.S. Government in the past had made several pleas to enter Bangladesh and to set up a base at St. Martin Island.

Govt. allocation: The Bangladesh Government has allocated taka ten crores for the rehabilitation of the farmers in the cyclone-affected areas as reports of more international assistance continued to pour in. Under the agricultural rehabilitation programme, the farmers would be provided with seeds, fertilizers and inputs including pumpsets to bale out the saline water following the tidal surge, an official spokesman said.

EC aid: The European Community Foreign Ministers agreed on Tuesday on a \$78 million aid package for Bangladesh. Each member of the 12 nation community will contribute to the fund in proportion to its gross national product.

Food convoy blocked in Bangladesh Hindu 16.5 41

DHAKA, May 15.

Survivors of last month's devastating cyclone in Bangladesh blocked roads in Hathazari region of Chittagong district on Tuesday in protest against the hijack of food trucks by thieves.

The *Bangla Bani* daily said the angry people took over 13 trucks, took them to a local market and forced other traffic off the road. The protestors also damaged one relief truck.

The daily said the survivors later handed the trucks over to police who pounded them saying that the drivers had failed to prove their credentials. — AP

DH 15.5.91

200 drowned in Bangla

DHAKA, May 14. (UNI) — About 200 people were feared drowned in the Jamuna river as scores of boats and motor launches sank during a severe storm which hit the northern district of Bangladesh, reports said today.

At least 50 fishing boats and three loaded ferries were missing after last evening's storm, *The Bangladesh Times* said quoting police officials. A motor launch with about 50 zero passengers and an oil tanker also in the river.

The United News of Bangladesh (UNB) said two ferries were grounded at Char island in Rajbari, about 120 km away from here, but the launches could not yet be traced. Another motor launch anchored at the Daulatdia Ferry Ghat sank near pontoon.

Five bodies were recovered and local administration officials were searching for the missing ones.

Hindu 15.5.91

Fresh storm hits Bangladesh

DHAKA, May 14.

About 200 persons were feared drowned in the river Brahmaputra as a large number of vessels sank when a severe storm hit seven sub-districts of Manikganj, northwest of Dhaka, last evening, reports reaching here said today.

Five bodies have been recovered from the river. Scores were injured and nearly 3,000 houses damaged, a report here said.

At least 50 fishing boats, three fully loaded ferries and three pontoons were missing till midnight yesterday. A motor launch with about 50 passengers and an oil tanker also sank in the river.

The storm with a velocity of more than 100 km per hour uprooted more than 50 electric poles, disrupting power supply. Telecommunication of the district headquarters with the subdistricts was also snapped. — Xinhua

Bangladesh acting President 'under pressure'

Hindu 15.5.91

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 14

The issue of transfer of power to the elected representatives in Bangladesh, that remained in the background due to the unprecedented natural calamity, is back in the news. This time the vital question has been raised by a senior member of the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP), creating an awkward situation for the acting President, Mr Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The acting President is said to be under pressure to resign and handover power to Parliament which according to the Opposition, is far from 'sovereign' under the present system. The State Minister for Food, Mr. Nazmull Huda, told Parliament on Sunday that Mr. Shahabuddin could easily handover power to the "Jatiya Sangsad" under the existing constitutional provisions. His assertion has given rise to a notion that despite the provisions available the acting President is holding on to power and prolonging "bipartisanship".

As per the Constitution, which now sticks to the presidential system, the acting President is the Head of the State and Government as well. But for all practical purposes, Begum Khaleda Zia has been running the Government though without valid sanction. In fact, even under the Presidential system, the powers and functions of the Prime Minister show that the Parliamentary system has been workable and it now needs only a statutory cover.

BNP's feeler: But Mrs. Khaleda Zia is possibly little interested in going for the Parliamentary system, although informed political quarters thought that she may reconsider her stand and not take an unnecessary risk by holding a presidential poll within a few months. Political analysts see the assertion of Mr. Nazmul Huda, a close aide of Mr. Khaleda, as the feeler of the BNP administration which is being criticised by media both at home and abroad for failing to coordinate emergency relief work to bring succour to the millions of cyclone victims in the country's

southern coast.

The "bipartisanship character" of the government has also led to criticism from donors, many of whom have reportedly opined that such a setup has hampered relief activities.

Mr. Shahabuddin, who has till now shown little interest in remaining in office, has said repeatedly that under the existing Constitution he has no scope to handover power to the speaker of Parliament. In fact, it is the broad consensus of experts that unless the system of Government is changed by amending the constitution or a new President takes office through the scheduled polls, the question of transfer of power will be delayed. But the BNP Minister was categorical in saying that power could be transferred if the acting President wants to do so.

To avoid possible hitch between the Prime Minister's office and President's Secretariat, Mr. Shahabuddin has already transferred a number of his responsibilities to Begum Khaleda Zia to meet the day-to-day exigencies. The handing over of the relief godown and relief coordination cell was one such move.

Media allegation: Meanwhile, the western media including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), has reported that there was a feeling that the armed forces did not fully engage themselves in relief work and that they joined work sometime after the cyclone struck. The armed forces are under the President. The order of mobilisation came a week after the Principal Staff Officer of the Supreme Commander (the President is the Supreme Commander) was put under the Prime Minister.

The acting President's office did not come out with any statement on the assertion of the BNP Minister. There was no official demand from the Prime Minister's office for Mr. Shahabuddin's resignation either. Contradicting a newspaper report alleging lack of coordination between the President and the Prime Minister, the Government recently came out with a detailed statement. But the confusion in the minds of the people could hardly be erased. It is rather increasing day by day.

Hindu 14.5.91

U.S. task force in Dhaka

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 13.

In response to a request of the Bangladesh Government, the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, has ordered the Department of Defence to provide immediate assistance to supplement Bangladesh's efforts to recover from the last month's devastating cyclone and tidal surge. The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, Admiral Charles F. Larson, has already despatched a joint task force which arrived here on Sunday.

The joint task force is commanded by Major General Henry Stackpole who is heading a 29-member military delegation. A Bangladesh Defence Ministry press release said that the U.S. military delegation which brought with them some relief goods and specialised equipment for the restoration of telecommunication and emergency medical aid, would assess as to how far the U.S. armed forces could render physical assistance in overcoming the effects of the cyclone.

A U.S. embassy press release said, on the way are five helicopters and crews, air traffic control teams, seabees (construction brigade) and environmental preventive medicine units. They will reach Bangladesh by early May 15. The Fifth Marine Expeditionary Brigade embarked aboard the U.S.S. Tarawa and other amphibious ships, now homebased at the Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California. They left the Persian Gulf on May 7 for the U.S. with a stop in the Philippines when they were diverted to assist in the humanitarian efforts in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, till April 12, has received external aid commitment to the tune of \$218.01 millions. Mr. Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Secretary, External Affairs Division, said that the latest country to offer aid is Brunei Darussalam, when it said it

would provide \$100,000 to the cyclone victims of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Finance and Planning Minister, Mr. Saifur Rahman, has said that the country would be requiring at least \$3 billions to fully rehabilitate the damage and destruction caused by the recent catastrophe.

British sources said that seven leading charities have decided to launch a major joint appeal to bring further relief supplies to the victims. The action was agreed upon by the Joint Disasters Emergency Committee in London after detailed discussions on the catastrophic cyclone and the tidal surge. The British Government's aid to Bangladesh has been raised to £6.5 millions. Britain has also increased to four the number of Sea King heavy lift helicopters it is sending to Bangladesh.

PTI reports

The Bangladesh Government, which is assessing the extent of damage to its economy, has been assured by donors and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank of support in the rehabilitation programme, Mr. Chowdhury said.

52 more killed in Bangla floods

DHAKA, May 13. (Reuter) — Floods brought fresh havoc to Bangladesh, killing 52 more people as a U.S. task force arrived to help save millions still battling for survival after last month's devastating cyclone.

Officials said the north-eastern town of Sylhet was inundated after the Surma River burst its banks. About 52 people drowned in Sylhet and the Moulvi bazar area, bringing the death toll in floods to 200 in a week.

About one million people in the area were marooned by the rising waters, which have engulfed an area of 656 sq. km.,

India to rush rice

DH 14.5.91

NEW DELHI, May 13. (PTI) — Keeping with the commitment made by the Prime Minister, India today decided to rush 5,000 tonnes of rice and a railway expert to Bangladesh to study how it could help in the reconstruction of railway networks damaged in the cyclone.

An official spokesman told newsmen that the rice, which is urgently required, would start moving by surface route through the border town of Benapole in West Bengal.

India offers rice to Bangla

DH
13.5.91

DHAKA, May 12. (PTI) — India today offered Bangladesh rice and expertise to reconstruct its rail, road and communication networks thrown out of gear by the worst-ever cyclone and tidal waves 10 days ago.

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, who paid a brief three-hour visit to the country told the Bangladesh leadership that rice would be despatched immediately by trucks and the first consignment would reach in two days time. The exact quantum will be decided later.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar, who had separate meetings with the President Mr. Shahbuddin Ahmed and the Prime Minister Begum Khalida Zia, offered to extend whatever further assistance was needed to get over one of the severest calamities.

RELIEF FUND: The Prime Minister announced that a Bangladesh relief public contribution fund would be set up to enable Indians to contribute to mitigate the sufferings of the friendly neighbour.

A Bangladesh government spoke-

man said as of now 1.26.000 people had been killed in the cyclone which struck 13 coastal districts on April 29-30 but casualty figures were still coming in. The cyclone had rendered millions homeless.

During the discussions, the Bangladesh Prime Minister and other leaders expressed the problems faced by them in the reconstruction of the communication systems particularly railways and road which had been severely damaged by the cyclone, an official spokesman told newsmen.

The Indian Prime Minister readily agreed to send a senior railway expert in a day or two to assess the damage and the assistance required by them.

TRAINING OF PERSONNEL: The Prime Minister during the talks also offered training facilities to Bangladesh personnel in weather forecasting.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar told Bangladesh leaders that it was for them to decide what help they required and India would share its expertise with them in a spirit of brotherhood to

reduce the effects of the unprecedented human calamity.

THOUGHTFUL: Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khalida Zia while appreciating the Indian gesture said it was very thoughtful of Mr. Chandra Shekhar to have taken time off from his busy electioneering schedule to visit the country and express the solidarity and sympathy of the Indian people.

Soon after landing at Dhaka airport, the Prime Minister, who was received by Begum Zia and other high dignitaries, flew by helicopter to pay his respects at the national martyrs memorial Sat Saver, about 33 km to the north west of Dhaka.

Later at the President's office, Mr. Chandra Shekhar was briefed by the principal staff officer, Brig Ghuyiamon on the details of the cyclone effect. The Prime Minister was also apprised of the relief measures.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar was also shown a video clip of the damage

Continued on Page 9 Col. 1

Continued from Page 1

caused by the cyclone.

BEYOND IMAGINATION: Describing the post-cyclone situation as "something beyond human imagination," Mr. Chandra Shekhar said, "we shall do our best to help Bangladesh."

The Prime Minister said India was ready to provide any number of helicopters Bangladesh needed for relief and rescue operations and this had been conveyed to the Bangladesh High Commissioner in New Delhi. So far, six Indian Air Force helicopters are now assisting relief operations.

Earlier, talking to reporters accompanying him from India, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh and other Saarc countries can utilise India's remote sensing facility and other scientific knowhow to help minimise the damage caused by natural calamities.

He refuted the criticism that his visit to Dhaka was late and said "the first priority was not my visit but

immediate help."

Mr. Chandrashekhar was seen off by Begum Khaleda Zia. On being asked about her talks, Mrs. Zia said she told the Indian Premier that Bangladesh, having a rice eating population, naturally needed rice from India. "We also conveyed our need for medicines," she added.

BANGLA PM TO VISIT DELHI: The Bangladesh President, Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Begum Khalida Zia accepted Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's invitation to visit India.

The dates for the visits would be decided late, an official spokesman said.

FRESH STORM BREWING: Meanwhile, Meteorologists worried by a distant storm brewing in south-eastern Bay of Bengal have stepped up monitoring fearing the new turbulence could move towards Bangladesh.

A low pressure zone persisting over India's Andaman Islands since Friday has triggered concern among experts in Dhaka's main weather observatory

which says the new storm appeared to be gaining strength.

RELIEF GOODS LOOTED: Hungry mobs along the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh, including the port city of Chittagong, have started attacking and looting food shops and warehouses, according to a report in the Sunday edition of mass circulation Bengali daily *Sangbad*.

In Chittagong city, medicine sent as relief were being sold at a high price in various places, including around the city's medical college. Mobs have attacked and looted wholesale rice shops on the island of Sandwip, reports said.

BANGLADESH EXPORTS FOOD: Ironically, Bangladesh is exporting food to Britain while thousands are starving according to a local tabloid *The News of the World*.

It said three plane loads of fruit, fish and vegetables arrived in London last week as the British government sent out £6.5 million worth of aid. The paper tracked shipments from Dhaka to street markets and curry shops in Britain.

India to rush rice to Bangladesh

Hindu 13.5.91

From Haroon Habib.

DHAKA, May 12.

India has pledged all possible help and assistance to Bangladesh to cope with the post-cyclone situation. The immediate Indian help will include rice, which the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar has said, would be despatched to Dhaka from Calcutta in a couple of days.

"Whatever we can do will be done, within our means", Mr. Chandra Shekhar told presspersons at the Zia International Airport before his departure on conclusion of his two and half-hour whirlwind tour to Dhaka. The Prime Minister, flew back to Varanasi from where he came here this morning, after suspending his election campaign.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar, who was accompanied by the External Affairs Secretary, Mr. I. P. Khosla, held separate talks with the acting President, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, and the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia.

He was also briefed at the President's Secretariat Relief Cell about the extent of damage caused by the April 29-30 cyclone and tidal surge, the human casualty of which is now officially put at 1.38 lakh.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar described the devastation caused by the cyclone as "tragic and the worst calamity Bangladesh has experienced." He said India would do its best despite its own financial constraints "because Bangladesh needed to be helped" at this hour.

He said he had assured Begum Khaleda Zia, of all possible help and added that rice would be rushed from the Government stock in West Bengal. The quantum was not known. The offer by India include rebuilding of damaged rail-links, roads and bridges.

To a question, he said, India was ready to provide more helicopters, in addition to the six already given. He pointed out that he had already told the Bangladesh High Commissioner in New



The Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, with the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, during his three-hour visit to Dhaka on Sunday. — UNI/AFP

Delhi that India could provide "as many helicopters as Bangladesh required."

Mr. Chandra Shekhar, while meeting Begum Khaleda Zia, said his Government would soon set up a "Bangladesh Relief Fund" in India.

At a brief meeting with the acting President, he expressed his country's sympathy and solidarity with the the people and Government of Bangladesh at this hour of great distress". The Prime Minister also conveyed a message of the President Mr. R. Venkataraman, expressing sympathy and solidarity with the cyclone-battered people.

Soon after his arrival, Mr. Chandra Shekhar

flew to Savar near here, in a Bangladesh airforce helicopter to pay homage to the martyrs of the country's liberation war.

Begum Khaleda Zia later told presspersons - that she had asked Mr. Chandra Shekhar for rice and medicines. She and a few senior Cabinet Ministers were present at the airport to see the Prime Minister off.

PTI reports:

Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed and Begum Khaleda Zia have accepted Mr. Chandra Shekhar's invitation to visit India.

The dates for the visits would be decided later, an official spokesman said.

Diarrhoea taking its toll in Bangladesh

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 12.

In the wake of the trail of devastation left by cyclone Bangladesh needs ships and helicopters urgently to link with off-shore islands to save millions of survivors.

Diarrhoeal diseases have already become an epidemic in many of the affected areas, said *The Daily Star*. Most of the survivors are homeless and without drinking water, food and life-saving drugs.

Relief agencies and correspondents returning from the remote worst-affected areas said that the sea-borne relief operation had become difficult because of the choppy waves. Care International, a leading relief agency, warned that the "people of the area (Chittagong and Cox's Bazar) will start dying soon, unless they can be reached. They will die of dehydration, infection and malnutrition."

The government deployed 17 helicopters to airdrop about a lakh kg of dry food on which these people now survive.

The U.S. is planning to provide helicopters to Bangladesh from its nearest bases. Two giant planes — C-141 and Galaxy-5 — arrived on Friday carrying some 27,000 pounds of relief goods and tools, officials said. Most of the areas remain inaccessible for lack of transport and affected areas are still under water.

Pure water is virtually non-existent in coastal area and the survivors are forced to drink contaminated water for survival.

The Government has decided to draw 40,000 tonnes of food from its allocation in the SAARC reserves. In addition Bangladesh will also draw substantial quantities of food from the quotas of India and Pakistan. The country's largest daily *Ittefaq*, said that the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Li Peng, had sent a message to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Khaleda Zia, promising to send food relief.

The Government has rejected the Opposition's plea for forming an all-party relief committee.

Hindu 13.5.41
der the acting President, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

UPI reports:

Looting: Hungry mobs along the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh, including the port city of Chittagong, are attacking and looting food shops and warehouses, according to a report in the Sunday edition of mass circulation Bengali daily *'Sangbad'*.

In Chittagong city, medicine sent as relief are being sold at a high price in various places, including around the city's Medical College. Mobs attacked and looted wholesale rice shops on the island of Sandwip, reports said.

Hindu 12/15/91

Bangladesh flood situation worsens

DHAKA, May 11.

At least 150,000 people were marooned when three major rivers burst their banks in four Bangladesh districts overnight, according to officials and press reports. At least eight people were feared drowned and thousands of mud huts destroyed.

The overflowing Surma and Kushiara rivers had inundated large areas in the tea-growing northern district of Sylhet. Local officials said the situation would worsen if it rained today.

In nearby Moulavibazar district, the Kushiara threatened to overflow the town protection embankment while in Habiganj district low-level areas had been inundated.

The situation in eastern Comilla district also deteriorated following breaches in the Gumti river embankment, officials said. Widespread crop losses were reported from the flood-hit districts.

Dhaka's residents scurried out into the streets when a mild tremor shook the capital today, but there were no reports of damage.

A slight earthquake also shook a hilly region in eastern Bangladesh. There was no immediate report of damage.

Newspaper reported that six persons mostly children and teenagers, drowned in the Sylhet region. Another newspaper said two more persons died when their houses collapsed in the swirling flood waters.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent said it had counted, 1,25,763 deaths from the April 30 cyclone that was centered on Chittagong and spread its fury over the flat coast and offshore islands. — AFP, AP

Haroon Habib reports:

The *Kalbaishakhi* — the worst-type of localised tornado — continued lashing several parts of the country. Almost every day *Kalbaishakhi* hits the mainland causing extensive loss of life and property. A total of six tornados hit Comilla, Sirajgonj, Ghorashal, Gazipur and other places including Dhaka killing at least 200 people in the last nine days.

Assam situation: The overall situation in Assam continued to be grave today with Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts remaining under flood waters and the rainfed rivers rising at an alarming rate in Sibsagar.

Official reports said surface communication remained disrupted in the three Barak valley districts, where lakhs of people had been affected.

D.H. 12.5.91 /

Rivers burst banks in Bangla

DHAKA, May 11. (AFP) — Homes of at least 150,000 people were flooded when three major rivers burst their banks in four Bangladesh districts overnight, officials and press reports said here today.

The Bangladesh Observer said in the tea-growing northern Sylhet district, water from the Surma and Kushiara rivers has inundated large areas.

Local officials said the situation would worsen if it rained today. "We are prepared to face the situation and the administration had been alerted," an official said over phone.

In nearby Moulavibazar district, the Kushiara River threatened the town protection embankment while in Habiganj district low-lying areas had been inundated, reports said.

The flood situation in eastern Comilla district also deteriorated following breaches in the Gumti river embankment, officials said. Widespread crop losses were reported from the flood-hit districts.

DH 11.5.91
80 killed as storms hit Bangla

DHAKA, May 10. (Reuter & PTI). — Fresh storms pounded Bangladesh relentlessly killing at least 80 more people, officials said on Friday as international aid was flown into the poverty-stricken country for millions facing disease and hunger after last week's devastating cyclone.

Storms packing 100 kph winds swept across seven towns in northern and eastern Bangladesh on Thursday night, destroying hundreds of mud houses and uprooting trees and electricity pylons.

At least 80 people were killed, among them 15 people drowned when their boat capsized in the Jumna river near Serajanj. A further 200 people were injured in the gales.

DIARRHOEA BREAKS OUT: Bangladesh's health directorate said diarrhoea had killed 951 people in 23

districts in the past two weeks. Most of the deaths, it said, were in cyclone-affected regions.

"We think the situation will worsen in the next two weeks as diseases and hunger take a higher toll of lives", Mr. Mohammad Islam of Oxfam said.

Agricultural experts fear that the salt water that flooded the lands of the offshore islands during the cyclone will prevent a year of crops.

RELIEF: Planes started arriving in Dhaka on Friday with medicine, food and cloth for an estimated four million victims.

A C-5 galaxy transport and a C-141 cargo plane landed with relief materials from the US Government. A C-130 plane from Thailand brought in rice.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda,

who toured stricken areas in the Chittagong region for three days, said Bangladeshis would have to live with natural calamities.

"It has been a part of our life as it comes every year in one form or another," she told a rally in the southern hill tracts town of Rangamati on Thursday.

But she said she expected international aid to help overcome the tragedy.

Twenty-six countries have so far pledged emergency aid totalling \$ 202 million, including \$ 106 million from Saudi Arabia.

The Japanese Government said Tokyo would give \$ 7.5 million additional aid to Bangladesh in response to Dhaka's appeal for massive foreign assistance.

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offered helicopters for rescuing the stranded people in the hurricane-affected areas. — Our Special Correspondent

Hindu 11.5.91

DH 11.5.91
Floods hit election work in N-E States

From Utpal Bordoloi
 DH News Service

GUWAHATI, May 10. — The cyclone that flattened Bangladesh also lashed the seven states of north-east India on the far side of that country, leaving a trail of devastation and literally dumping cold water on the tempo of electioneering which was just beginning to pick up.

Torrential rains that accompanied the cyclone disrupted road, rail, air and telecommunication links throughout the region triggering landslides in the hilly regions and floods in the plains. According to the latest reports, available here, at least 28 people were killed throughout the region. In Arunachal Pradesh, ten army personnel were killed and 36 others missing after their barracks at Bomdir near Tawang were swept away by a landslide. Seven persons were reported killed in Tripura while in Assam's southern Barak valley, 12 persons either drowned or were killed by lightning strikes.

TRAIN SERVICES CANCELLED: At least two states have been completely cut-off from the rest of the country. Train services between Guwahati and Silchar, headquarters of the Barak valley and gateway to Mizoram, has been indefinitely suspended with rail tracks submerged by the floods which forced nearly two million people to seek shelter on highground. In Karimganj district almost all government offices, banks, post offices, police stations, the sub-deputy collectors office and the flood control office were under four to six feet of water, with people taking shelter on rooftops. The situation was equally bad in the other district headquarters of Hailakand. Besides the Barak, the Bukni,

Sonai, Kathakal and Dhaleswari rivers had all burst their banks at different places. Plucking and processing of tea in about 35 gardens had come to a halt with bushes under water. Oil exploration operations in the valley has also been badly affected, according to official reports.

Landslides at different points have also snapped National Highway 40 connecting Guwahati - Shillong - Silchar, National Highway 44 connecting Silchar - Aizawal, National Highway 39 linking Nagaland and Manipur to the rest of the country through Assam, National Highway 52 connecting Itanagar and the Tezpur - Tawang Highway. While Tawang remains cut off since May 3, vast stretches of low-lying areas in the Lohit river valley have been submerged, including several large villages and many polling stations in the Lekang Assembly constituency.

According to the Meteorological Office here, the monsoon in Assam will officially begin on June 3. Thus, the pre-monsoon rain and resultant havoc has caused no amount of worry to political parties and candidates for the ensuing elections, which would be held in Assam on June 6 and 8 and in the other north-eastern States on May 23 — less than two weeks away. Electioneering work has been badly hit in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, with the worst sufferer undoubtedly the Barak valley. In the Brahmaputra valley too many candidates are in a fix. In many areas the candidates and their supporters have not been able to visit their constituencies or villages. The political parties are for the time being confining their campaign to the urban areas.

According to official sources, the government machinery in the north-eastern states is now seriously overstretched by having to gear up for relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations in addition to making poll pre-

Hindu 11.5.91
80 dead as fresh tornado hits Bangladesh

DHAKA, May 10.

Bangladesh, struggling to recover from the effects of a cyclone that devastated 13 districts recently, continued to be battered by fresh spells of tornado and storm that left at least 80 people dead and over 2,000 injured, according to reports received here today.

Heavy rains not only hampered relief operations in the cyclone-hit islands but also rendered over one lakh people homeless. Major rivers in Sylhet and Comilla districts were flowing above danger-mark, the report said.

Gale at speeds of 110-115 km per hour, pounded Narsingdi, Sirajganj, Habiganj, Tangail, Noakhali districts, destroying thousands of mud-built houses, uprooting trees and electric poles, the Bengali daily *Banglar Bani* reported. At least 30 people were reported missing when a boat capsized in the Jamuna river in Sirajganj district following a tornado on Thursday. Seven sub-districts of Sirajganj also bore the brunt of the tornado which claimed seven lives, the report said.

Even as the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, whose Government came under fire from the Opposition for alleged bungling of relief operations, was on a tour of some cyclone-affected areas for the last three days, press reports reaching here said thousands of people were still without food and shelter in the worst-hit Chakoria in Chittagong district and Banskhal in Cox's Bazar district.

D.H. 10.5.91

N-E States reel under floods

SILCHAR, May 9. (PTI) — The army has been requisitioned in the worst-hit Barak Valley of south Assam as flash floods triggered by heavy rains following last week's cyclonic storm, battered the entire north-east, taking a toll of 16 lives and rendering lakhs homeless, according to official reports.

In Assam, nine people were killed and 17 lakh rendered homeless, the reports said.

The rain-fed Barak swamped Khelma village drowning four persons while five others were killed in lightning strikes in Cachar and Karimgang districts on May 6 and 7. Two persons were feared drowned when their boat capsized at Labourtuta village in Cachar.

Silchar town is partially submerged with flood waters of the Barak river continuing to rise.

The Brahmaputra and its tributaries are rising all along the 800-Km long Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to Dhubri following incessant rains for the 12th day today.

The rain-fed flood water submerged

vast tracts of human habitation and crop land in the riverine areas.

All major rivers in Tripura crossed their red marks today following unceasing rains after last week's devastating cyclone that left seven persons dead, according to official reports.

The State Government has set up 100 relief camps to shelter at 1500 families affected by the flash floods in many areas in the aftermath of the cyclone, the reports said.

The continuous downpour has also inundated low-lying areas in all the three districts of the State, they added.

The overflowing Nambul river inundated several low-lying areas including Uripok, Heirangkhonthong, Lamphel and Shanushang in Imphal District of Manipur today, according to official sources.

The water levels of some important rivers, including, Imphal and Iril, were steadily rising due to incessant rains during the past week.

AID SOUGHT: The Mizoram Government has sought interim relief worth Rs. 30 crore from the Centre to

carry out rescue and relief operations in the State.

At least five persons have been killed, over 10,000 houses damaged and crops and property worth Rs. 30 crore destroyed in the cyclonic storm, a Mizoram Government release said in New Delhi.

Communication links within the State and outside have also been severely affected, the release added.

While national highway No. 54 has been inundated, the Vayudoot service, the only air link for the State, has been suspended due to inclement weather.

Hinder 10.5.91

Caution in aid to Bangladesh puts India in bad light

From K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, May 9.

For the last two days, the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, has been trying to contact his counterpart in Bangladesh, Begum Khalida Zia, on telephone but has not been able to do so, partly because she was out of Dhaka, touring the cyclone-hit areas and partly because of disturbed communication channels. The call was intended to assure her of India's help, in the form and manner suggested by the Bangladesh Government for urgent, effective relief measures.

India has already announced an aid of the order of Rs. 10 crores. Soon after the tragedy struck Bangladesh on April 29 night, New Delhi allocated Rs. 1.5 crore for relief measures. The amount was too meagre, with the result that New Delhi got a flak for being niggardly. Actually, the Government was faced with a problem — in the absence of a regular budget it could not withdraw a huge sum from the Consolidated Fund of India, and, for a while, no way out appeared in sight. The initial amount of Rs. 1.5 crore was given out of the External Affairs Ministry's limited budget. Subsequently, however, Rs. 10 crore was found from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

Planes to ferry relief: The Government has set apart three transport planes which ferry relief supplies to Bangladesh, but do not operate within that country. Apart from that, three helicopter have been placed at the disposal of the authorities in Dhaka. Care appears to have been taken to keep India's role in relief operations in a low key to ensure that an essentially humanitarian problem and an unprecedented tragedy does not get politicised, as had happened once in the past.

However, this caution has been carried to an extreme, with the result that India is seen as a passive spectator of the tragedy while countries from far and near are rushing aid on a massive scale. Those who have had the opportunity of viewing foreign television coverage of the Bangladesh tragedy and related events in the last few days could not have formed any other impression. India could not have been seen in a worse light.

The explanation for this lapse lies in the fact that New Delhi's style in dealing with other countries has been cramped because of the political crisis and the inherent constraints of the interim government. It is doubly unfortunate that this should have happened in regard to Bangladesh, with which a new beginning was made early last year, with the Dhaka visit of the then External Affairs Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral.

continued: D.H. 10.5.91

Tornado hits Bangla again: 8 killed

DHAKA, May 9. (PTI & UNI) — At least eight people were killed and over a 100 injured when a tornado accompanied by rains, lashed Bangladesh's Narsingdi and Sirajganj districts overnight Wednesday, officials said here today.

The fresh natural calamity struck the country as Bangladesh, with the support of increasing assistance from abroad, was busy providing food and shelter to 15 million people affected by the unprecedented cyclone that struck 13 of its coastal districts on April 29.

A gale, with a wind speed of 100-115 km per hour swept Sirajganj District leaving more than 100 injured, including 30 students trapped under the debris of a school building that came crashing down.

FLAYED: The Opposition today flayed Bangladesh's new government for failing to help the millions of victims of last month's cyclone in a stormy session when parliament reopened after a four-day break.

MPs belonging to several Opposition parties forced Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas to drop the day's normal business, saying the 330-seat House should discuss the disaster which has left at least 1,26,000 people dead.

Hindu 9.5.91

Tornado kills 50 in Bangladesh

DHAKA, May 8.

At least 50 persons were killed and more than 1,000 injured in a severe tornado that swept over Gazipur district, 25 km from here yesterday, the Bengali daily *Ittefaq* said.

Earlier reports, however, feared that the casualty might be near 200 considering the magnitude of the devastation. Almost all the houses of five villages, electric pylons and trees were levelled. Several passenger buses were also upturned by the tornado which lasted for 20 minutes.

Hindu 8.5.91

Fresh tornado strikes Bangladesh: 30 killed

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 7.

Within seven days of the cyclone which battered the coastline of Bangladesh killing thousands of people a fresh tornado with a severe windspeed killed at least 30 people in Gazipur district today. Several hundred people were injured, according to preliminary reports. (According to AFP, 200 people were feared killed and over 1,000 injured.)

Earlier on Monday, another cyclone with less intensity struck the district of Comilla killing 11 people. The Met office had forecaste occasional rain accompanied by gusty wind. Today's tornado near the Tongi industrial belt reportedly damaged dozens of houses and destroyed smaller industrial units.

DH 8.5.91

Tornado slams Dhaka suburb: 200 feared dead

DHAKA, May 7. (AFP) — Some 200 people were feared killed and more than a 1,000 injured when a severe tornado slammed into an industrial suburb near the capital today, officials said.

A fire brigade official said rescuers had so far recovered five bodies from the suburb of Tongi, 20 kilometres north of Dhaka, adding that so far 100 people had been hospitalised.

In Dhaka's main casualty hospital, three more bodies were brought in along with many of the injured, a hospital doctor said, refusing to give more details.

DH 8.5.91

Master relief plan for cyclone-hit

DHAKA, May 7. (PTI & AFP) — Prime Minister Khaleda Zia today announced that a master plan for relief and rehabilitation of cyclone-ravaged coastal districts would be finalised in a couple of days, and denied Opposition charge that relief being supplied was inadequate.

Official sources have put the death toll in the cyclone that hit 13 districts in southern Bangladesh at 125,720 and of those suffering due to the after-effects of the cyclone at 15 million.

The sources said army, navy and the civil administration were still grappling with rough weather to provide food and shelter to thousands of hungry and disease-stricken survivors.

INQUIRY: Meanwhile, the Bangladesh President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, has ordered a court of inquiry to probe into the damage caused by the cyclone to several aircraft of the air force and navy ships at Chittagong port.

Mrs. Zia denied press reports that relief measures were not adequate in certain affected areas, and said army and civil administration were doing their best to reach remote and inaccessible areas where thousands of people were reportedly languishing for help for nearly a week.

She described as untrue reports that there was no co-ordination among different relief agencies at the national level. "Had that been not there, many people who survived the cyclone would have been dead by now," she said.

She, however, admitted that rough sea had prevented some ships carrying relief materials from reaching the affected islands, but after that, "we could reach those places by

helicopters."

DENIAL: Begum Zia told newsmen that there was no relief material sent from abroad now lying stranded at Dhaka airport. "We are sending it as soon as possible," she added.

She also denied that there was a communication gap between authorities in Dhaka and relief machinery at the affected areas, and said the Ministers and Government secretaries had been given the charge of supervising relief and rescue operations.

Begum Zia said the supply of electricity and water had been restored in Chittagong town and the city airport and sea port made operational.

Criticising the 9-year rule of Gen.H.M. Ershad, she said "those 9 years, coupled with unbridled corruption, led to the collapse of the national economy."

RELIEF ASSURED: The international community pledged relief worth \$ 150 million so far, with Begum Zia having predicted the total loss at \$ 2.38 billion.

More foreign aid has been promised by groups, including the European Community, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the South Asian Association of Regional Co-operation.

NO REFUELLING: Meanwhile, the Bangla Government has withdrawn refuelling facilities for foreign aircraft, saying Bangladesh's petroleum supplies had been hit by the cyclone which also crippled its only refinery, officials said.

The Petroleum Ministry, which slapped the ban on Monday and introduced petrol rationing for vehicles, said international passenger jets flying via Dhaka will not be exempted from the restrictions as its supplies were

seriously dislocated.

Airports will, however, continue to fuel international transports bringing relief materials for the victims of the disaster, planes carrying VIPs and aircraft belonging to the State-owned Bangladesh Biman Airline, they said.

EPIDEMICS FEARED: Epidemics threatened to break out and high winds swept southern part of Bangladesh devastated by a killer cyclone.

OPPOSITION CHARGE: Meanwhile, leaders of the Left wing five-party alliance accused the Government of "hiding the truth about the loss of life and property in cyclone", reports the State-owned BSS.

PM RELEASES 10 CR: Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar today made available Rs. 10 crore from his relief fund for the cyclone-hit people in Bangladesh.

The amount is to be utilised for immediate relief and for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the affected people, an official release said here.

Two IAF aircraft carrying 10 tonnes of relief assistance — consisting of food, clothing and sanitation items — reached Dhaka today, it said, adding that the Indian High Commission in Dhaka was in constant touch with the Bangladesh authorities to ascertain their requirements.

The Indian Red Cross was also liaising with the Bangladesh Red Crescent to determine priorities, it added.

TERESA'S OFFER: Mother Teresa has offered to take care of the children and the old people who had been rendered homeless by the cyclone in Bangladesh till they find a home again.

The offer was made during the Nobel Laureate's meeting with Mr. Shahabuddin here yesterday.

Hinder 7.5.91 ✓

Begum Zia facing bigger storm

DHAKA, May 6.

In a country long ruled by the military, an inexperienced civilian Government must now deal with the large-scale devastation wrought by a cyclone that has killed more than 125,000 people.

As casualties steadily mounted, the Bangladeshi Government was caught in an awkward transition of power, with the lines of authority still unclear.

"If this popularly elected civilian Government fails, it will have a catastrophic socio-political impact. There will be political instability and democracy will be at great risk," said Mr. Emajuddin Ahmed, a former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and a political columnist.

Army officers handling the logistics of ferrying aid to millions of people made homeless say they are frustrated by Government inefficiency.

"If you ask me about the relief efforts so far, I can simply tell you that we are not satisfied," said one Army commander involved in the relief effort. He spoke on condition of anonymity. He declined to discuss specifics, but said "There is lack of coordination between different agencies."

Confusion: Confusion was obvious on

Saturday when Mother Teresa arrived in Dhaka with 725 kg of powdered milk and biscuits on a commercial flight from India.

An Air Force officer bickered for several hours with a bureaucrat from the Foreign Ministry's relief coordination cell about who was to take charge of the supplies and whether customs were due.

"The crisis seems to be in the management of relief and rescue work. The Government has not been successful," Mr. Ahmed said. Begum Khaleda Zia's Government denies allegations of inefficiency.

"We are doing everything possible for relief. The Prime Minister is touring the affected areas almost every day," said Mr. Rafiqul Islam, a junior Minister and close aide to Begum Zia. "One must understand that this is a mountainous problem that an affluent country would find difficult to cope with," he said.

Disagreements: Sources close to Begum Zia's party admit that disagreements between the acting President, Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed, and the Prime Minister are hampering relief efforts.

One source said Mr. Shahabuddin

Ahmed refused to release \$60 millions from a fund he inherited from the former President, Mr. H. M. Ershad, because Mr. Ershad's rule is under investigation for alleged financial irregularities.

"The Prime Minister phoned the acting President immediately after the cyclone to get him to release money from the President's relief fund. But the President did not agree," said the source. The next day Begum Zia opened a relief fund at her Prime Minister's secretariat.

An independent Bengali-language newspaper, *Kagaz*, reported yesterday that Mr. Shahabuddin is displeased with Begum Zia's failure to consult him on relief operations.

Begum Zia is also getting little help from the Opposition parties. She proposed a meeting with her longtime rival, Sheikh Hasina, leader of the Awami League, and other Opposition leaders to discuss the relief work. No one accepted the invitation, apparently refusing to confer any prestige on the Prime Minister. But political parties are still conducting separate relief operations that are not linked with Government efforts. — AP

India rushing aid: P 9

Hinder 7.5.91 ✓

India rushing aid to Bangladesh

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 6.

Two Indian Air Force aircraft will be landing here tomorrow carrying tonnes of relief materials for the victims of the killer cyclone and tidal surge. More flights of IAF aircraft are expected within the next few days.

India became the first country to send three helicopters urgently needed by Bangladesh for relief and rescue operation in the inaccessible areas. The IAF helicopters are giving daily sorties to the affected areas. The relief materials will include dried food, clothing, water purification tablets, and bleaching powder.

The French Government announced that it will take an initiative to raise an international fund to help Bangladesh. The visiting French Minister for Humanitarian Actions, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, after touring the worst-hit areas, said that his country would propose a special United Nations conference of donors in New York to raise funds for reconstruction of the cyclone ravaged Bangladesh.

Hindu 7.5.91

Bangladesh's continuing nightmare

THE FURY OF the elements does not seem to have spent itself out in Bangladesh where the most murderous cyclone the world has seen in recent times is already feared to have killed nearly half a million people. There have been fresh threats that this woe-ridden country may again be hit by high speed gale and rain. The relief which stricken Bangladesh will need from the international community will have to be on a scale far higher than it had been at any time earlier. It will be very unfortunate if the competing demands for relief on a scale which could be just as massive from the Kurdish refugees worsens the aid weariness among the richer countries and makes their efforts to provide relief to Bangladesh half-hearted.

The magnitude of the demands which the Bangladesh Government as well as the international community will face while trying to lift the victims of the cyclone and the tidal waves from their misery will be far more staggering and colossal than they had been at any time earlier. The aid amounts which have been so far made available — £7 millions committed by the European Community to buy food, blankets, tents and other emergency supplies, £1.25 millions from Britain, \$1 million from the UNICEF, etc., — are far too inadequate to be of much consequence because of the nightmarish devastation Bangladesh has suffered. The relief operations will have to take care of not only feeding the people who are starving and have been rendered homeless but also save them from the scourge of epidemics resulting from the unprecedented fouling up of the environment. The mobilisation of helicopters and aircraft for reaching supplies of food and medicines to the victims will be among the gigantic tasks which the international community will have to take up since the fleet of planes and helicopters which Bangladesh has is much too small to meet the far too despairing demands made on it. Though India is itself hard-pressed for resources and is right now very much preoccupied with the mid-term elections less than three weeks away, it will have to extend a big helping hand to its unfortunate neighbour.

What has been as bewildering as it has been heart-breaking about the ordeal which Bangladesh has gone through on this and on earlier occasions has been the total helplessness against the havoc-laden tidal waves. It is said that the shallow waters off the Bangladesh coast make the country far more vulnerable than it would have been otherwise because such geography makes it prone to recurring tidal waves. The near-impossibility of ensuring protection to the people exposed to tidal waves emerges in all its starkness in view of the fact that the Bangladesh coast is littered with numerous populated small islands.

It is a pity that while tidal waves — also known as tsunami — have been the subject of study and research for more than a century, the sense of helplessness it has spread continues. The toll of lives taken by tidal waves in Bangladesh could be the highest recorded in history since the number of people killed in the tsunami described as having been the most destructive was the one which hit Awa in Japan in 1703 killing 100,000 people. There have also been very alarming reports that Bangladesh will continue to be hit by tidal waves in the future. It is the duty of the international community, particularly of the weather scientists to consider whether it is really beyond the capabilities they have to minimise if not wholly eliminate the horrors of the recurring tragedy of tidal waves.

DH 7.5.91

Another storm sw

DHAKA, May 6. (PTI) — Inclement weather continued to hinder relief operations for the third day today in the off-shore islands of Bangladesh which were worst-hit by last week's killer cyclone and tidal surge that claimed more than 1.75 lakh lives, according to official information released.

Rough sea, submerged vessels and other objects are reportedly affecting the navigation, affecting transport of relief material.

A severe storm again swept over the already cyclone-battered areas of the southern coast yesterday, while danger signal number three was hoisted in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases was reported from the cyclone-affected areas of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Bhola, Feni, Barisal and Pirojpur, claiming 200 lives till yesterday, the Bengali daily *Sangbad* said.

NOR'WESTER: Weather experts forecast a nor'wester to hit some districts in Khulna and Dhaka division today with a wind speed of upto 60

km per hour.

Authorities claimed intensified relief operations in affected areas with air and other goods, but such operations were many places as they fell

Corpses and carcass floating on the sea or lying many affected islands.

The Bangladesh Government sought more helicopters purification tablets and tainers for carrying drinking

Finance Minister Sa said Bangladesh needed billion to make good losses caused by last year's disaster.

Mr. Rahman, who returned from his fortnight's tour of the US yesterday, told newsmen international community "promptly and positively Bangladesh recover the by cyclone.

Meanwhile, on-rush caused floods in eight north-eastern district o

Gale alert in Bangladesh

Hindus

B.S. '91

DHAKA, May 5.

Meteorologists issued warnings of fresh rain and a high-speed gale on Sunday as reports came in of more deaths in another tidal wave in the country's south already devastated this week by a killer cyclone.

The weather office here said 'Norwester' rains with accompanying gales with wind speeds of up to 60 km an hour would lash northern and southern Bangladesh later on Sunday. "Wind speeds could gain momentum in many places," a weather official said, adding the Norwester would hit the districts of Dhaka, Bogra, Rajshahi, Pabna, Tangail, Faridpur, Sylhet and Mymensingh.

"A cautionary signal has been sounded," the weather office said, adding the fresh squalls could reach any intensity.

Similar warnings have been sounded in the southeastern district of Nohakhali, one of the 16 of Bangladesh's 64 provinces virtually destroyed by last Monday's cyclone, which has also left at least 125,000 people dead nationwide.

State-owned television issued fresh appeals to boats and ships to operate carefully because of the approaching bad weather and debris from vessels sunk by the week's natural disaster.

Fresh tidal wave: Newspapers reported a fresh tidal wave in the cyclone-devastated areas of Banshkhali, Anwara, Kutupdia, Maheshkhali and Chakoria and said some 200 people have died overnight in the fresh surge.

A similar tidal wave has slammed into the islands of Sandwip, St. Martin's, Nijhumdwp and Sonadia after pounding rain on Friday and Saturday raised the level of rivers that empty into the Bay of Bengal, the dailies added.

These four islands located off the country's southeastern coasts have been virtually washed away by a giant tidal wave that accompanied last Monday's cyclone amid reports that tens of thousands of people were carried away into the Bay. There was no independent confirmation of the reports, and officials said they were checking.

Bad weather hits relief work: Hampered by bad weather and inadequate transport, relief supplies are failing to reach most survivors of the



Bangladeshi men and women, clutching their children and the few possessions they could salvage, make their way to dry land on Wednesday near the southern island town of Kutubdia, one of the places worst hit in last week's cyclone and tidal surge. — PTI

storm-shattered Bangladesh coast, officials and news reports said on Sunday.

The relief Ministry control room said the official count of dead stood this morning at 125,720. An official news agency yesterday put the figure at over 125,000 and newspapers predicted the final toll will equal the world's worst storm disaster with half a million casualties.

Bangladesh's tiny air force of 12 helicopters and a few fixed-wing aircraft have been handicapped by gusty winds and rain over the last few days, which continued today.

Officials dealing with relief said the Government had not given foreign relief organisations a list of specific needs, but had only issued a general appeal for help.

Criticism of the handling of the rescue operation was led by political opponents of the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia's six-week-old Government. "There is no coordination in relief work. The Government also failed to brief the foreign missions about the exact picture of devastation and the needs of the affected people," said Mr. Tofael Ahmed, Legislator of the opposition Awami League.

The Government denied that a lack of coordination between ministries and agencies has stalled the relief and rescue mission. "We have employed everything we have for coping with the situation,"

Cholera epidemic feared: Relief officials and Red Crescent volunteers said decomposing bodies were contaminating the water and the environment threatening the survivors with a cholera epidemic. "Many survivors will die if water and food do not reach them immediately," said a Red Crescent official.

Mother Teresa, Sharif survey damage: The Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa and a French Minister today surveyed the extent of the catastrophe caused by the cyclone. Begum Khaleda Zia accompanied the foreign dignitaries in an Air Force helicopter which flew over the worst hit islands in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the southern coast.

Survivors loot Govt. food: Hungry survivors looted trucks carrying Government food in Chittagong, the *Sangbad* daily reported.

A group of people stopped the trucks in Fauzdarhat area on Saturday and fled after looting them, the newspaper said, adding that food and water were yet to reach the storm-battered people of the district, five days after the cyclone struck.

No independent confirmation was available but the newspaper said local officials confirmed the incident, first reported after the calamity. — AFP AP



Survivors of the devastating cyclone scramble for tins of dry food as relief supplies are air-dropped in Moeshkali in Bangladesh on Saturday. — UNI/ AFP

Bad weather, poor transport hit relief work in Bangladesh

DHAKA, May 5. (AP, Reuter & PTI) — Hampered by bad weather and inadequate transport, relief supplies are failing to reach most survivors of the storm-shattered Bangladesh coast, officials and news reports said today.

The official count of dead stood this morning at around 1,25,000 while newspapers predicted the final toll will equal the world's worst storm disaster with half a million casualties.

Bangladesh's tiny air force of 12 helicopters and a few fixed-wing aircraft have been handicapped by gusty winds and rain over the last few days, which continued today.

Speedboats and fishing trawlers which could have been used to ferry supplies to marooned islands either sank in Tuesday's storm or were out of

the newspaper said, adding that food and water were yet to reach the storm-battered people of the district, five-day after the cyclone struck.

Newspaper reports and Opposition politicians here have alleged that relief was inadequate and that in some places nothing had got through.

The Government had refuted the allegations but admitted that broken communications, bad weather and lack of helicopters and boats were slowing the distribution of relief goods.

The Government has also denied that a lack of co-ordination between ministries and agencies has stalled the relief and rescue mission.

However, a Red Crescent official said "Many survivors will die if water and food do not reach them immediately".

Outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases was reported from a few places in the cyclone-hit islands due to consumption of contaminated water.

Both the civil and military medical teams, however, have been able to reach some inaccessible areas of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar, officials said.

Telecommunications between Chittagong and Dhaka and between Cox's Bazaar and Dhaka still could not be restored even six days after the cyclone that severely damaged the Betunia satellite ground station and uprooted a number of telephones poles.

Meanwhile, France pledged to donate \$ 86,000 for the cyclone victims.

DM 6.5.91

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Spontaneous response to Dhaka appeal for help

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 4.

International response to the Bangladesh Prime Minister's appeal for emergency help is "very good and spontaneous". While many countries and agencies have supplied emergency relief, many others are making anxious queries on the extent of damage and how best they could stand by the distressed humanity.

Responding to Begum Khaleda Zia's appeal, the United Nations Relief Organisation (UNDRP) is sending a team to assess the magnitude of destruction and necessary relief requirement. The King of Bhutan is sending a senior Cabinet Minister, besides providing two million Bhutanese Nutrum. India, which is sending three helicopters has sent emergency relief worth 7 lakhs dollars. Jamiat Ul Ulama Hind has also donated Rs. 15,000.

The Bangladesh Parliament, which held its first session after the deluge on Friday adopted a resolution condoling the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Special prayers were offered in all the mosques as well as the temples and pagodas.

UNDP aid

BSS pool reports:

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide \$50,000 immediately for

emergency relief requirements. The UNDP administration will also send a team on an urgent basis to assess the extent of damage and determine the additional assistance. This was disclosed to the Finance and Planning Minister, Mr. Saifur Rahman, when he met with the UNDP administrator, Mr. William H. Draper, in New York an official handout said here tonight.

The UNICEF has donated one million dollars as emergency assistance for the cyclone-affected people of Bangladesh, a UNICEF press release said here. The UNICEF Executive Director, Mr. James P. Grant, who released the amount for the distressed Bangladeshis, has also appealed for \$5 millions more for UNICEF relief operations in Bangladesh, the press release said. To meet the immediate health and safe drinking water needs for the children in the affected areas, the UNICEF has procured supplies worth \$250,000 from its Copenhagen division.

The European Economic Community is preparing to forward aid to Bangladesh to the value of 10 million euros.

The European Community has committed seven million pounds to buy food, tents, blankets and other emergency supplies. Britain's contribution in this would be £1.25 million.

Telex and telegram links between Dhaka and the outside world were fully restored on Friday via the satellite earth station of Talihabad, a T and T Board source said here.

'Aid fatigue' among rich nations?

BONN, May 4.

International relief efforts for survivors of the cyclone disaster in Bangladesh are slowly getting under way, but there are clear signs of an "aid fatigue" among rich nations following the massive operation undertaken by them to help the Kurdish refugees.

So far, the only significant offer of help for the cyclone victims have come from the European Commission in Brussels which yesterday pledged 20.5 million marks for immediate relief of the survivors. But even this is seen by some commentators as "very little" considering the dimension of the disaster and also in comparison with the 300 million mark assistance the Commission had offered for the Kurdish refugees.

In Bonn, the German Government yesterday gave 250,000 marks to the German Red Cross for the immediate assistance to the cyclone victims. In contrast, the German Government had pledged 415 million marks for Kurds.

Cyclone aid ship sinks

Dhaka, May 4.

A private ship chartered by the non-governmental U.S. relief agency CARE has sunk in the Bay of Bengal while sailing with food and medicine to a cyclone-hit island in the southeast, a CARE spokesman said here on Saturday.

At least one CARE (Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere) executive was reported missing after the trawler carrying 10 relief officials sank off Bangladesh's Noakhali district late on Friday, the spokesman said. "The chartered trawler was going to Hatia when it went down because of bad weather," the spokesman said.

Haunted by hunger, disease

ANWARA (Bangladesh), May 4.

Laila collapsed and died on Friday a few hours after her father buried her younger sister next to his house, shredded by a giant cyclone that hit Bangladesh four days ago.

Laila, 12, and her 10-year-old sister were among a dozen children who, driven by thirst and hunger, had drunk from foul drains after the cyclone smashed water mains in this country on Monday. The result was death from chronic diarrhoea. "Who will explain to children that one should boil water... and in any case what do we use to light a fire?" asked a neighbour, 10 minutes after the burial of the two children in the relentless rain which has been pounding Anwara since Thursday.

Hunger and fears of an epidemic haunt Anwara's 250,000 survivors of Monday's cyclone and accompanying tidal surge, which wrecked havoc and left 92,000 people dead, according to latest official counts. Tens of thousands of others are feared missing.

"Allah's blessing was on us and not more than a couple of hundred died in this place, but now God and Government have both turned against us and we will now die of hunger and disease," said Anwara's former political representative, Mr. Sidiq Ahmad.

"There are no relief supplies and we do not even have a single tubewell... we are drinking floodwater... There is disease everywhere, in every house," wept a woman, who said half her family had died in the cyclone and the surviving members were starving and sick.

Located some 40 km from the southeastern port city of Chittagong, this once-prosperous farming district's 125 villages have been virtually flattened by the storm and seawater has washed away their precious food and water supplies.

The fetid smell of rotting food rose from tonnes of wet rice laid out by the desperate residents across a road, but fresh rains on Thursday and Friday had reduced the carefully stacked piles into running puddles.

Sonadeep, "island of gold" in the Bengali language, is home to some 5,000 people. It was one of the areas worst hit. Only 2,000 people remained on Sonadeep yesterday. The rest were dead or missing.

As water started to recede yesterday from remote islands in the Bay of Bengal, survivors began searching for the missing. "Most of the missing are presumed dead, since in Bangladesh's close-knit society it is easier to account for the missing. We know each other very well," said Mohammad Zahir, a Sonadeep fisherman.

Standing amid bloated, decomposing bodies, a half-naked middle-aged man knelt to see the faces of dead men, women and children. He nodded his head in sorrow. Wearing only a sarong, his nose covered to fight the stench, the man murmured something and walked to the next heap of bodies. He did not find the face or faces he was searching for.

Bodies were strewn throughout the (180-km) coastal belt. At some places there were heaps of dead, numbering in the dozens.

At Maheshkhali island, a lone woman stood amidst rubble — her brick and cement home before the cyclone hit. From the helicopter, no other survivors could be seen in her village.

In another village men were seen covering bodies with tree branches, but no one attempted burials. There was not enough dry land and equipment to dig.

Fighting for food: Men fought each other for food dropped from the helicopter. A man in

Kutubdia island held onto a large chunk of unrefined sugar thrown out of the helicopter as about 50 other men began to pull at him to get their share. The man dropped the sugar bag on the ground and then covered it with his body.

Teenagers waded through waist-deep water to salvage tins of biscuits that had fallen in the water. Women waved at the helicopter and prayed with folded hands for relief.

On island after island, residents hoisted makeshift red flags to draw the attention of helicopters.

As Samsheer landed his helicopter on a small island with a patch of dry land, hundreds of hungry men stormed it. They begged for food and water. Some tried to climb into the helicopter. Ignoring the risk, they waited below the craft as rice bags weighing 100 kg were dropped.

Dozens of plastic cans, each containing 20 litres of water, were dropped, some smashing as they hit the ground. Dozens of the coastal residents, many of them fishermen, were seen trying to net fish with baskets.

Women were drying whatever rice they could salvage from storage. "Clothes are a big problem at the moment," said Mr. Karim Dad, Director of relief operation at Chittagong. "What we have at the moment is insufficient relief. This is nothing. We need more," Mr. Dad said.

As an AN-32 transport plane, which took journalists from Dhaka to Chittagong, prepared to take off, about a dozen children among the onlookers came forward.

"We have not eaten for past three days, except for a few biscuits and puffed rice," said Mohammad Lukman, 12. Me and my brother want something to eat," he said pointing at his six-year-old brother, Imran. — AFP — AP

Hindu S.S. 91

Chittagong turns into a ghost city

From Haroon Habib

CHITTAGONG, May 4.

Four days after the greatest human tragedy — the April 29-30 cyclone and tidal surge — Chittagong resembles a ghost city and the survivors are still fear-stricken. This Correspondent visited some parts of (Greater Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, where killer nature silenced the lives of well over a lakh people.

The casualty figure will remain a matter of conjecture because, first, there was no access to the worst-hit islands for a few days and, secondly, thousands of families in those remote areas seem to have been washed away by the storm and tidal surge leaving virtually no survivors. The official toll figure rose up to 1.25 lakhs while unofficially it is about five lakhs.

The official figure includes the latest confirmation of 40,000 deaths in Cox's Bazar district alone, said Mr. Abdullah-al-Noman, State Minister for Forest, Fisheries

IAF helicopters begin work: Three Indian Air Force helicopters have landed here today to meet the urgent need of at least 20 aircraft for emergency relief work.

Mother Teresa arrives: The internationally reputed "champion of the distressed," Mother Teresa, arrived in Dhaka today with her relief materials from Calcutta, showing her great concern for the survivors, who pass their days amidst acute uncertainty.

The Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, will be reaching here tomorrow accompanied by an eight-member high-power team.

While the telephone system is yet to be restored, electricity has been partially restored in the Chittagong port city. The city's green canopy, that formed its skyline has disappeared. The million trees that made the city so special are all gone.

The people of Chittagong, the birth place of many great warriors from where the armed struggle against Pakistani barbarity first broke out in 1971, now seem visibly afraid — as if they have lost all their moral strength to fight nature.

The airport, where a good number of Air Force planes were damaged, started operating in a limited scale from yesterday.

In Banshkhali, hundreds of carcasses were still found. Stench from the decomposed bodies filled the air and diarrhoea has reportedly claimed lives. There are few houses left in this densely populated coastal area. All the nine unions are still submerged, though in many places the water has started receding.

The sea resort of Cox's Bazar and the nearby islands, have been shattered and innumerable houses razed to the ground, rendering lakhs homeless. In Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar, Chokoria, Kutubdia and Teknaf the deaths run into thousands. In Chakoria and Maheshkhali as the helicopter flew low one could see survivors waiting for food, water and medicine to be air dropped. The vast expanses of the fields are littered with human and animal carcasses, fallen trees and tangled masses of houses. Diarrhoea and other diseases have been reported from all these places.

Gusty wind and rainfall hampered relief work. Rescue workers and relief teams, backed by Navy ships and Air Force helicopters, continued their efforts braving the inclement weather.

Saga of courage

AFP reports:

"I tied my children to myself when the wall of water broke over my head. After that it was all very dark," said Razia Khatun as she huddled for shelter with her three sons, Salman, Rahim and Suleman, in Chittagong's dockside area.

For Ms. Khatun, 24, who married a middle-income city worker six years ago, it was a lonely battle as disaster struck 30 minutes past midnight and neighbours were too busy saving their own lives.

For eight hours she sat clinging to a post on her rooftop in Patenga, 3 km from Chittagong, and when her home collapsed into the water she swam with her three young children to another house and then to another.

"My husband was not in on Monday and I was about to sleep with my children when the ground shook and the skies split with a roar so loud that I thought I had gone mad," she said.

Grabbed a rope: Ms. Khatun scrambled out of bed and the first thing she grabbed was a long rope when she saw a wall of water three metres high racing towards the airport about one kilometre from her brick and mortar house.

"I coiled the rope around the three boys and wrapped it across my shoulders and could just climb on the roof when the roaring wall of water broke over my head. Then, it was all very dark, but I clenched and dragged at the rope to keep the children at my side."

Winds tearing at 235 km an hour threatened to pluck her and her children from their perch and sea water

pushed up by a tidal surge reached to her waist. She lost her grip twice, sliding into the water, and twice she slithered back up in pitch darkness, but after four hours her house gave way and she plunged among floating debris.

"I swam blindly, I often dived to push up my drowning sons. I remember being hit by an electric pole and just before passing out I saw another house and I climbed on its roof," the thinly built woman said.

"It was madness all round. Invisible people were screaming but I could see nothing. ... Salim had fainted and I was pumping his stomach for water," she said, adding that her second perch collapsed at daybreak.

"The rope was shredding so I began swimming again, but this time hands pulled me up and my children to another roof crowded with people like us," she said. Deep cuts on her neck and waist where the rope was tied stood out like welts from a whip.

U.N. relief team rushes to Bangladesh

UNITED NATIONS, May 3.

The U.N. has started sending assistance to cyclone devastated Bangladesh as its various agencies geared themselves to rush help and essentials in a big way. A team of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation is already in Bangladesh helping the Government assess the damage and identify immediate needs. The essential commodities are expected to be airlifted shortly. The organisation has started moving supplies from neighbouring countries.

Chittagong in a trance: The death toll from the devastating cyclone that hit Bangladesh on Monday may eventually reach if not surpass, that of November 12-13, 1970 when at least 300,000 people died. This fear was expressed by one of the country's most prominent journalists who returned on Thursday from a two-day trip to the port city of Chittagong.

Waheedul Huq told the UPI that at least 10-20 thousand people had perished in Chittagong and outskirts alone, and the toll could be as high as 50,000. "Chittagong city is passing through a trance, where nothing seems real. Once a green-top city with numerous tall trees, it is now grey. The leaves have vanished. Few that are left look as if they have been burned by fire," Huq said. The city still had no electricity, telecommunication or water supply even on Thursday.

Outbreak of diarrhoea: Even as the operation continues to airlift food and medicines to millions of marooned survivors of the cyclone, health workers are struggling to contain a raging diarrhoea epidemic. More than 1,000 people have died and an estimated 70,000 laid low by severe diarrhoea, that over the past four months has overrun 20 districts — PTI, UPI & IPS

Begum Zia appeals to nation

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 3.

Talking to newsmen in the cyclone-hit areas, the Bangladesh State Minister for Relief, Mr. Lutfar Rahman Khan, said reports of casualties were still pouring in from different affected areas, islands and pockets. Mr. Khan pointed out that

of the total one crore people directly affected, at least 50 lakhs have been rendered shelterless.

Eight merchant ships including two naval vessels capsized in the Chittagong port, which has gone completely inoperative. Hundreds of fishing trawlers and other fishing boats and vessels have also been damaged or drowned. The fate of several thousand fishermen, who were in the bay, is still uncertain, said agencies.

In a radio and TV broadcast, the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, appealed in an emotion choked voice to the people to rise to the occasion. She requested her political opponents to come forward with zeal and dedication in the hour of crisis. The Prime Minister called all the NGO's — local and foreign — to supplement the Government activities for mitigating human sufferings. And she sought the help of the international community with the relief work. At the call of the Prime Minister, dozens of organisations, institutions and persons have already started donating money, blood and help of other sorts.

The Government of the U.S., France, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China and many other countries have sent their messages of condolence announcing emergency aid for the cyclone victims.

Despite the best of efforts mustered by the Government, reports reaching Dhaka from farflung areas, said that the supply of relief goods are inadequate in most places. Horrifying tales of death and destruction are still pouring in even though thousands of armed forces personnel, Red Crescent volunteers and other agencies are engaged in their round the clock operation. Many people in the remotest areas such as Sandwip, Hatiya, Maheshkhali, Banskhali, Urirchar and Kutubdia are reportedly starving since help has not reached these inaccessible areas.

Burying thousands of corpses has posed yet another problem, especially in the areas which are still under water. Even after three days of the deluge, the communications with Chittagong, and also with most affected areas, have not been restored. The international telecommunication has been restored partially.

Cyclone toll put at 5 lakhs

Hindu n. 5.41

Survivors yet to get succour

DHAKA, May 3.

Distraught rescue teams battled to cope with the world's biggest recorded natural disaster claiming an estimated 500,000 lives after Tuesday's cyclonic storm devastated the Bangladesh coast.

Rescue teams trying to reach marooned survivors reported heavy casualty figures with hundreds of thousands of bodies strewn across a watery landscape, and several times more than the official count of 92,255 dead till noon today.

Disease and starvation stalked the hapless survivors trapped in islets accessible only by the far too few helicopters and speedboats.

The only succour reaching the victims seemed to be special prayers held in mosques all over the grief-stricken nation. Tomorrow is to be observed as the day of national mourning.

A Red Crescent official at the control room in the capital said they have no information about the fate of 1.3 million people in Bashkhali and Anwara upazilas in Chittagong as they have no cyclone preparedness programme in those areas.

The south-eastern island of Swandip where at least 100,000 deaths have been reported is still submerged under five to six feet of water. Other islands including Hatua, Kutubdia and Maheshkhali were also submerged even four days after the catastrophe.

Survivors in the battered Kutubdia, Maheshkhali, Chokoria, Swandip, Hatia, Char Nijam, Urirchar and Nijhumdip islands are facing tremendous hardships. Succour is yet to reach them as there is an acute transport problem and disrupted communication network. — UNI

U.S. aid

R. Chakrapani reports from Washington:

About a dozen private groups in the U.S. including the American Red Cross, CARE, and Salvation Army have opened their registers to receive private contributions to channel relief to the victims of the Bangladesh cyclone that has claimed thousands of lives and left millions homeless.

Additionally, the U.S. Administration, which made an emergency cash allocation of \$1,25,000 (about Rs. 25 lakhs) for relief work, said this would be followed by further assistance as soon as an assessment of the damage was received from two of its teams at the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka now working on relief needs. An official of the Foreign Disaster Assistance said the department would move fast when a clear picture of the ravages of the cyclone was available in a matter of days.

The Bangladesh Embassy here is in touch with the State Department. The Ambassador, Mr. Ataul Karim, said his Government urgently needed helicopters which were the only means of reaching supplies to the stricken people in the waterlogged areas. He had requested the State Department for help in getting them.

The Bangladesh Finance Minister, Mr. Saifur Rahman, who came here to attend the Fund-Bank meeting, held discussions with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, to ask for food aid under the World Food Security Programme.

In Washington, he met officials of the International Monetary Fund, U.S. officials and also Senators and Congressmen to apprise them of the situation and tell them of the urgency of providing massive relief to people rendered homeless and who were in need of food and clothes. "All have assured their support" he said.

"Already some support has been extended by the U.N.D.P. and the U.S. Government. The IMF is sitting in a meeting tomorrow to propose enhanced support for Bangladesh."

Cong(I) contribution

Our Delhi Correspondent reports:

The Congress(I) president, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, today sanctioned Rs. 10 lakhs from the AICCI Relief Fund for the cyclone victims. A cheque for the amount would be presented to the Bangladesh High Commissioner in India, according to the party spokesman, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee.

U.N. sends help: Page-5

More deaths reported in flood-ridden Bangla

DHAKA, May 8. (Reuter & PTI) — Tornado and flash floods have wreaked more devastation and killed more people in Bangladesh, officials said today, with the country already reeling from more than 125,000 deaths caused by the worst cyclone in its history.

Dhaka divisional commissioner Waliul Islam said 25 bodies had been recovered but he expected more today.

"It is a tragic story of one we treading upon another," he said.

MORE DEATHS: Sakhina Bibi, 22, lost her two-year-old baby in the tornado. She said the wind tossed her house in the air and the corrugated steel sheets from the roof "flew like missiles."

In a separate disaster, two boys drowned when flash floods swept across at least 132 sq.km of northeastern Slyhet region when three rivers burst their banks after heavy rains on Tuesday.

The fresh floods hampered government efforts to mobilise help for the victims of last week's cyclone disaster.

Dhaka has appealed for \$ 1.4 billion



Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia wiping her tears while talking to media persons in Dhaka on Tuesday. — UNI/AFP photo

relief and reconstruction aid for some four million affected people.

At a meeting with donor countries on Tuesday, the government requested 23.9 billion taka (\$ 670 million) in immediate relief and 26.4 billion taka

(\$ 740 million) to help rebuild Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries.

AID PLEDGE: Meanwhile, Bangladesh has been assured of over \$ 142 million of foreign economic assistance, official sources said here today.

Out of this commitment, relief materials is worth \$ 127,100 million, cash aid amounting to \$ 11.65 million and food worth \$ 4,212 million, they said.

India is among the 12 countries and organisations, which has made the aid commitments. The others being the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Pakistan, Japan, Netherlands, Switzerland, Thailand and the World Food Programme.

Bangladesh's donor countries and other international agencies have also assured Dhaka of short-term relief and long-term reconstruction assistance for feeding the cyclone-affected people officially estimated to be 15 million.

French Minister for Humanitarian Actions Bernard Kouchner, who was recently here, promised his country

would supply 20,000 tonne of wheat and other foodgrains besides a dredger to clear the Chittagong port, one of Bangladesh's lifelines, of sunken ships and boats.

HASINA BLAMES GOVT: Bangla Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has accused Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government of failing to provide relief to the cyclone-affected people in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Addressing a press conference in Chittagong yesterday after touring some of the affected areas, Sheikh Hasina said the administration was lacking co-ordination in conducting relief operations with the result that the affected people did not receive any help even six days after the cyclone on April 29.

"The people have been crying for food, shelter, clothes and medicines. But there was none to help them", she said.

Almost at the same time, Mrs. Zia, during a visit to Chittagong yesterday, distributed relief materials at six places. She directed the authorities to ensure that no one was left without government relief.

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DM 45.91

Battered Bangladesh

WITH ALMOST THE entire coastal belt of Bangladesh hit by the cyclone that crossed the coast near Chittagong earlier this week, it is clear that the death toll in this disaster will rise much higher than the estimates of 150,000 to 200,000 now being given out. Communications are badly disrupted in an area where they are difficult at the best of times, covering as it does the delta of a mighty river system. Whole islands have disappeared from view under water, and the port of Chittagong, Bangladesh's second biggest city, itself looks like a vast sheet of water from which a few tall buildings peep out. If 30,000 residents of a small islet are feared to have drowned in the flood waters, and the delta contains tens or hundreds of such islets, the figure of 200,000 dead in the worst cyclone to have hit independent Bangladesh must seem ridiculously low. With relief supplies yet to get into top gear — most of the submerged islands having little room for helicopters to land — and clean water as well as sanitation at a premium, it is obvious that very soon starvation and epidemics of water-borne diseases such as cholera will multiply the death toll several fold. It is a sombre thought that early warning of the impending disaster enabled at least a million people to be evacuated to relatively safer, higher ground, but evidently to little avail as the coast was battered by 240-kmph gales and the water rose two or three metres above land.

The fledgling democratic government of Begum Khaleda Zia has appealed for massive international aid to combat the crisis, which could not have come at a more inopportune moment as it struggles to establish its credentials. The inadequacy of foreknowledge of the disaster in mitigating its effects highlights the vulnerability of coastal Bangladesh. What was once a country well endowed by nature is now exposed as one that, thanks to the shallowness of the extensive coastal/ delta region, must literally struggle to keep its head above water. Environmentalists concerned about the rapid discharge of heat-retaining or greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by the excessive consumption of fossil fuels have been citing the example of Bangladesh as one country of which large tracts will get submerged as the greenhouse effect causes oceans to rise by a couple of metres the world over. This week's cyclone constitutes advance indication of the kind of long-term effects that may be expected as the greenhouse effect builds up in the crucial decades to come. Climatologists are probably equally concerned about another phenomenon, perhaps related — the growing frequency of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal affecting States on India's coast. Although the prediction and mitigation of natural disasters is making much progress under the onslaughts of modern science, if contemporary civilisation becomes responsible for increasing the frequency of such catastrophes, this is one area in which we will have to run as fast as we can to stay in the same place.

DM 45.91

Storm claims 5 in Tripura

AGARTALA, May 3. (UNI) — At least five people were crushed to death and scores injured, and property worth crores of rupees damaged during the severe cyclonic storm which lashed Tripura twice since Wednesday night.

Official sources today said four people, two of them tribals, died in house collapse in Ultachara and Karamchara areas in the worst affected north district, another person succumbed to his injuries after being hit by a tree that was uprooted at Machabnagar under Sabroom subdivision in south district.

Earlier, on Tuesday night also, the entire state along with neighbouring Bangladesh experienced a cyclone.

DM 45.91

Tough task for rescue teams

Continued from Page 1

epidemic would spread to other areas if water purifying tablets were not despatched immediately to the affected areas.

Newspersons and photographers, who visited the cyclone-torn areas, saw thousands of marooned people in a deplorable condition hungry, thirsty, half naked and without shelter.

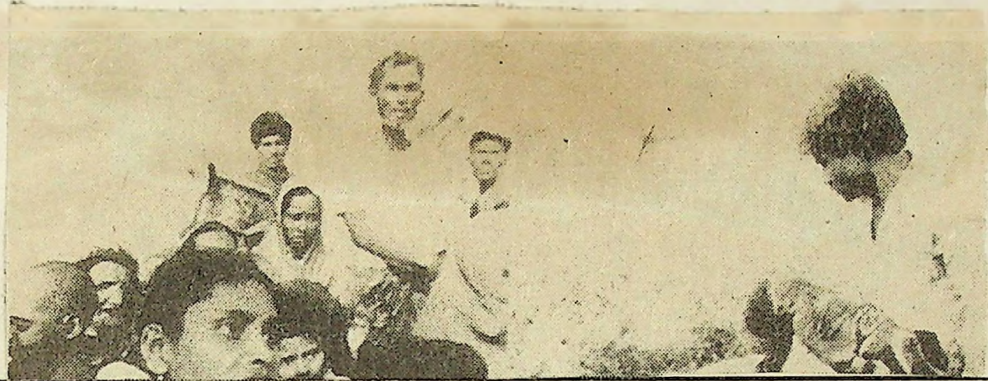
Despatch of relief to many remote and isolated islands have been hampered by shortage of transport and disrupted communication links.

The Bangladesh Government has sought at least 20 helicopter from abroad to air-drop foodstuff and medicines.

Heart-rending pictures of the cyclone disaster in Bangladesh, women wailing, the bodies of men, women and babies washed ashore along with those of cattle, have been shown on US TV as the Government and private relief agencies consider how to help.

International aid

The US has so far given \$ 125,000 in immediate aid, but State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutu-wiler said at Washington this was only a temporary measure until a further



WORST EVER NATURAL DISASTER

D.H 4.5.91 ✓

Bangla toll 5 lakh: tough task for rescue teams

DHAKA, MAY 3.
(UNI & PTI):

DISTRAUGHT rescue teams in Bangladesh are battling to cope with Tuesday's devastating cyclone, the world's biggest recorded natural disaster, which has claimed an estimated 5,00,000 lives.

Rescue teams trying to reach marooned survivors reported heavy casualties with hundreds of thousands of bodies strewn across a watery landscape, and several times more than the official count of 92,255 dead till noon today.

Disease and starvation stalks hapless survivors trapped in islets accessible only by the far too few helicopters and speedboats.

National mourning

The only succour reaching the victims seemed to be special prayers held in mosques all over the grief-stricken nation. Tomorrow is to be observed as the day of national mourning.

Government agencies and voluntary workers are working overtime to restore communications and reach fresh

water and food to 10 million survivors in 16 districts in coastal areas, officials said.

Flags will fly half mast tomorrow to mourn the victims and special prayers would be held all over the country in all shrines.

The Government has also cancelled until further orders feasts, festivals and illuminations at all levels and ask people to observe austerity till the crisis is over.

Islands still cut off

Contact with many remote islands in Chittagong and Barisal are yet to be established.

A Red Crescent official at the control room in Dhaka said there was no information about the fate of 1.3 million people in Bashkhali and Anwara Upazilas in Chittagong as they have no cyclone preparedness programme in those areas.

The south-eastern Swandip island, where at least 100,000 deaths have been reported is still submerged under five to six feet of water. Other islands, including Hatua, Kutubdia and Naheskhal are also submerged even four days after the catastrophe.

The storm killed 60,000 people around the port city of Chittagong alone, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed told Dhaka's Cyclone Preparedness Centre.

Officials earlier said more than 29,000 people died around the coastal resort of Cox's Bazar and 3,000 in Noakhali coastal district.

The toll is going up like anything and may go up to anywhere, said an official, who asked not to be identified.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia appealed on Thursday for aid for 10 million people made homeless by the disaster.

Appeal for help

"Losses caused by the worst cyclone in memorable time have surpassed all previous records. So I tell you people around the world that we desperately need your help immediately", she said in a television broadcast.

The storm, with winds up to 235 kph, pounded Bangladesh's densely populated coast and at least a dozen offshore islands in the Bay of Bengal for nine hours on Monday night, flattening buildings and sinking boats.

"I shall not be surprised if the death

count surpasses 100,000, said State Minister for Relief, Lutfur Rahman Khan.

Some of the islands are still under water after waves six metres swept over them.

Thousands of corpses and animal carcasses from the worst-hit islands of Swandip, Hatta, Kutubdia, Bashkhal and Maheskhal are drifting downstream, posing a serious health hazard in the country's southern coastal belt.

Mass burials

The corpses are accumulating in different embankments of Cauar District. An official in Feni said fishermen netted 130 bodies from Feni river yesterday.

The local administration, with the help of relatives of the dead, have been recovering bodies drifting ashore and despatching them in trucks to different places for mass burials.

A diarrhoea epidemic has reportedly broken out in Kutubdia, Maheskhal, Swandip, Hatta, Bauhhalli and Bhola following scarcity of clean drinking water, food and medicines.

An official of London-based Oxfam, Mr. Saidur Rahman said the

Continued on Page 9 Col. 2

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1991

Travails of Bangladesh

THE DEATH TOLL of over 50,000 reported to have been taken by the cyclone which hit the entire coastline of Bangladesh with the Chittagong region reeling under its fury reveals once again the stark helplessness of this country against a natural disaster which has been vengefully heading towards it almost every year. What makes this recurring tragedy even more poignant is that the trail of the cyclone originating in the Bay of Bengal has during the last few years become as unerringly predictable as the havoc it was going to cause has been unstoppable. On this as on the earlier occasions, the cyclone, first seen centred 900 kilometres in the Bay of Bengal south east of Madras, started giving the jitters to populations as far apart as southern Tamil Nadu, Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Bengal which could have been its destinations. But it was heading towards Bangladesh presumably drawn by its hopelessly exposed and utterly defenceless coastline. The travail of Bangladesh which has been repeatedly ravaged in this manner makes the cyclone in its destructive ferocity seem a mythical calamity.

The huge death toll and the enormous destruction which the cyclone has inflicted on Bangladesh make it imperative that India and the rest of the international community rush all the aid they can to this cruelly menaced country. The cyclone warning systems which India has in recent years installed in its coastal regions have made possible the initiation of measures well in time to move people living close to the beaches to safer places. Building of cyclone shelters in the vulnerable stretches along the coast has also been of help. The establishment of an effective and reliable communications network to spread the warnings to the people is a vitally necessary adjunct. The colossal loss of lives running to tens of thousands almost every time Bangladesh is hit by cyclones might have resulted either from the non-availability of cyclone warning systems in the numbers needed or that the topography of the coastal areas cut up over a wide stretch by rivers makes it extremely difficult to effect movement of the vulnerable population well in time. Any assistance which India can provide to Bangladesh to protect its people better from cyclones should be ungrudgingly given.

The increasing massiveness of destruction being wrought by cyclones makes it necessary for scientists and meteorologists to further push back the frontiers of knowledge about them. The International Monsoon Experiment or Monex carried out in earlier years helped towards gathering valuable data which have thrown light on cyclone genesis and behaviour. Specially built sturdy aircraft flown by the National Hurricane Centre in Miami, U.S. in butterfly formations into storm clouds added vastly to the knowledge of air movements in the middle troposphere and at altitudes between 10,000 and 25,000 feet and their temperature and hu-

midity conditions. Studies carried out recently on tropical cyclones indicated that increases in the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere, now becoming an ecological menace, would raise the destructive potential of tropical cyclones by 60 per cent. Putting to effective use the knowledge of cyclones available with the international community of scientists and meteorologists implies not only the extensive rigging up of effective warning systems but also an administrative infrastructure which could save the populations hazardously exposed to the fury of the elements. Getting the administration prepared and the people geared to moving out of vulnerable areas at short notice would no doubt be a major challenge. The sorrow which the cyclones cause with distressing frequency to Bangladesh should impart an urgency to the task.

Many Bangladesh islands still submerged

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 2.

Serious environmental problems have been reported from Bangladesh's coastal areas ravaged by Monday night's cyclone and tidal wave. The slick from the damaged oil tankers has caused the deaths of thousands of fish.

Reports reaching here from the cyclone-battered islands off Chittagong, where human casualty was unprecedented, said the sea water off the city has been covered with an oil layer. Sea animals, besides fish have also died in large numbers.

The cyclonic storm accompanied by a nearly 20 ft high tidal wave devoured many parts of the Chittagong region. A dreadful silence prevails as most of the people, animals, trees and houses particularly in the island areas were washed away.

The casualties in the several densely populated islands like Kutubdia, Sandwip, Banshkhali, St. Martin, Maheshkhali and Chakoria can only be imagined. Despite repeated efforts, relief helicopters could not land in those places due to nonavailability of dry land. Nor could the rivercrafts go there due to bad weather.

Kutubdia and Chakoria were under at least 10 ft deep water till this morning. Even after three days of the calamity, a large part of Sandwip is-

land was under 5 to 7 ft deep water.

Hundreds of small fishing boats including trawlers and many seagoing vessels have either sunk or been badly damaged in the cyclone. The million dollar Karnafuli bridge, built recently with foreign assistance, was completely damaged.

The Patenga international airport of Chittagong is still out of order. Many airforce planes landing in the nearby base were heavily damaged. Three ships of the Bangladesh Navy were also badly damaged.

One of the greatest problems now faced is disposal of the thousands of decomposed human and animal bodies. Even after several mass graves, thousands more are lying uncared for. Those who have survived are in no position to even do the minimum religious formalities for their dearest ones.

The armed forces, which have been pressed into service in almost all the worst-hit places, are reportedly engaged in helping the people bury the bodies, particularly in the Chittagong region.

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10 MILLION HIT

1,50,000 feared dead in cyclone-ravaged Bangla

KUTUBDIA (Bangladesh), May 2. (UNI & PTI)

THE killer cyclone that struck the coastal areas of Bangladesh has taken a toll of about 1,50,000 lives so far as details of the devastation started pouring in.

A UNI correspondent who visited the area found scenes of death and devastation in Kutubdia, an islet inhabited mostly by fishermen.

Thousands of corpses and animal carcasses were floating in the sea waters around the islet once inhabited by about 80,000 people.

Silence reigned in the islet, the worst-hit spot through which the cyclone swept at 235 kmph in the early hours of Tuesday leaving no trace of human habitation in its wake.

Buried

At least 30,000 dwellers of this small islet surrounded by the Bay of Bengal were believed to have been buried in the sea.

A similar picture of corpses was seen in the islets of Maheshkhali and Chokoria in Cox's Bazar, Swandip in

Chittagong and Hatia in the Noakhali districts where 60,000 to 70,000 were feared killed.

Decaying bodies

The atmosphere of Kutubdia, Maheshkhali, Chokoria Hatia and Swandip reeked of decaying putrid bodies. Survivors frantically searched for dry places for funerals as most of the land was under 5-8 feet of water.

Succour is yet to reach these remote and isolated islands even three days after the natural catastrophe struck. The survivors in these cyclone-torn islands were passing their days beneath open skies without food and water. Winds with 50 to 60 kmph still lash Kutubdia, Maheshkhali and Swandip.

Unfed and half-clad coastal dwellers were seen scrambling for relief as a helicopter of the Bangladesh Air Force tried to land on Wednesday afternoon. But their hopes were soon dashed when the copter failed to land due to lack of dry place and left after only dropping some medicine.

Volunteers working in these areas feared the outbreak of epidemics as

ponds and tanks were filled with saline sea water and floating bodies.

Bangladesh today mounted relief operations to provide succour to some 10 million hit by the nation's worst cyclone in 20 years, battling crippling shortage of aircraft and speedboats.

A UPI despatch from Dhaka quoted a Bangladesh Minister as saying that the toll might reach two lakh.

Rescue and relief workers said reports of deaths were pouring in from different areas.

The official BSS news agency quoted the Communications Minister Oli Ahmed as saying the cyclone hit about 10 million people and flattened more than 10 islands in the Bay of Bengal and densely populated coastal belt.

16 districts hit

The relief operations were hampered by lack of helicopters and speedboats. Food supplies were not enough and more lives would be lost if communication lines are not established soon, an official said adding the cyclone hit 16 of the country's 64 districts.

India today announced Rs. 1.5 crore

worth of aid to the victims of the cyclone in Bangladesh.

In response to an appeal by Dhaka to the international community for help, the Indian Government decided to place three helicopters at Bangladesh's disposal to take part in relief work, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman said here.

The European Community is giving Bangladesh emergency food and medical supplies worth \$ 12 million to help the millions of people injured or left homeless by Monday's cyclone.

A spokesman for the EC Commission today at Brussels said it had agreed to buy \$ 9.6 million worth of wheat and vegetable oil from Bangladeshi Government stocks for immediate distribution to victims.

Medical supplies, tents, blankets and other supplies worth a further \$ 2.4 million would be distributed by the Red Cross and other relief organisations, he said.

Three teams from the British charity organisation Oxfam have joined the relief operation, airlifting food and water purification tablets to Chittagong, a spokesman for the Charity said

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1991

Travails of Bangladesh

Hindu
3.5.91

THE DEATH TOLL of over 50,000 reported to have been taken by the cyclone which hit the entire coastline of Bangladesh with the Chittagong region reeling under its fury reveals once again the stark helplessness of this country against a natural disaster which has been vengefully heading towards it almost every year. What makes this recurring tragedy even more poignant is that the trail of the cyclone originating in the Bay of Bengal has during the last few years become as unerringly predictable as the havoc it was going to cause has been unstoppable. On this as on the earlier occasions, the cyclone, first seen centred 900 kilometres in the Bay of Bengal south east of Madras, started giving the jitters to populations as far apart as southern Tamil Nadu, Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Bengal which could have been its destinations. But it was heading towards Bangladesh presumably drawn by its hopelessly exposed and utterly defenceless coastline. The travail of Bangladesh which has been repeatedly ravaged in this manner makes the cyclone in its destructive ferocity seem a mythical calamity.

The huge death toll and the enormous destruction which the cyclone has inflicted on Bangladesh make it imperative that India and the rest of the international community rush all the aid they can to this cruelly menaced country. The cyclone warning systems which India has in recent years installed in its coastal regions have made possible the initiation of measures well in time to move people living close to the beaches to safer places. Building of cyclone shelters in the vulnerable stretches along the coast has also been of help. The establishment of an effective and reliable communications network to spread the warnings to the people is a vitally necessary adjunct. The colossal loss of lives running to tens of thousands almost every time Bangladesh is hit by cyclones might have resulted either from the non-availability of cyclone warning systems in the numbers needed or that the topography of the coastal areas cut up over a wide stretch by rivers makes it extremely difficult to effect movement of the vulnerable population well in time. Any assistance which India can provide to

Hindu 3.5.91

Many Bangladesh islands still submerged

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 2.

Serious environmental problems have been reported from Bangladesh's coastal areas ravaged by Monday night's cyclone and tidal wave. The slick from the damaged oil tankers has caused the deaths of thousands of fish.

Reports reaching here from the cyclone-battered islands off Chittagong, where human casualty was unprecedented, said the sea water off the city has been covered with an oil layer. Sea animals, besides fish have also died in large numbers.

The cyclonic storm accompanied by a nearly 20 ft high tidal wave devoured many parts of the Chittagong region. A dreadful silence prevails as most of the people, animals, trees and houses particularly in the island areas were washed away.

The casualties in the several densely populated islands like Kutubdia, Sandwip, Banshkhali, St. Martin, Maheshkhali and Chakoria can only be imagined. Despite repeated efforts, relief helicopters could not land in those places due to nonavailability of dry land. Nor could the rivercrafts go there due to bad weather.

Kutubdia and Chakoria were under at least 10 ft deep water till this morning. Even after three days of the calamity, a large part of Sandwip is-

land was under 5 to 7 ft deep water.

Hundreds of small fishing boats including trawlers and many seagoing vessels have either sunk or been badly damaged in the cyclone. The million dollar Karnafuli bridge, built recently with foreign assistance, was completely damaged.

The Patenga international airport of Chittagong is still out of order. Many airforce planes landing in the nearby base were heavily damaged. Three ships of the Bangladesh Navy were also badly damaged.

One of the greatest problems now faced is disposal of the thousands of decomposed human and animal bodies. Even after several mass graves, thousands more are lying uncared for. Those who have survived are in no position to even do the minimum religious formalities for their dearest ones.

The armed forces, which have been pressed into service in almost all the worst-hit places, are reportedly engaged in helping the people bury the bodies, particularly in the Chittagong region.

NEW YORK: Skyscraper's birthday: The world's most famous skyscraper, the Empire State Building, celebrated its 60th birthday on Wednesday with visits from King Kong, actress Fay Wray and officials who hailed the building as an inspiration. Guests sang "Happy Birthday" as Wray, 83, cut one of the two cakes decorated with icing depicting the 443-metre-high building.

Cyclone toll in Bangla reaches 10,000

From Ataus Samad

DHAKA, May 1. — About ten thousand people have perished in Bangladesh in the cyclone that hit the off-shore islands and the coastal areas of the country last Monday night and Tuesday morning, relief officials said here today. A non-government source claimed in Chittagong that the number of the dead people on the Sandwip Island alone may reach 20,000 but there was no independent confirmation of this. The man who was making this claim is a local politician of Sandwip Island.

The number of the loss of human lives in the Bangladesh cyclone increased dramatically today when the development officer of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society on the Sandwip Island managed to establish contact with his head office in Dhaka. He told the Dhaka office that at least 5000 to 6000 people have been killed in the Island when it was hit by the storm and the sea surge. Water is still standing on the Island. Mr. Saidur Rahman, head of Oxfam, who visited the Kutubdia Island today said that 2000 people might have been killed in Kutubdia Island. He said that not a single house was standing in the Island. Thousands of carcasses were floating on the water. Reporters who flew in with him also saw human bodies.

Mr. Saidur Rahman said that he believed that the death toll in the cyclone in Bangladesh has passed 10,000 by now.

According to a PTI correspondent, at least one lakh people were feared dead in the cyclonic storm.

The cyclone slammed the coastal areas of Bangladesh at a speed of 233 KPH.

BSS quoting Bangladesh Navy said according to preliminary reports, properties worth about Taka 5000 crore were destroyed in the cyclone.

About 90 per cent crops and 60 to 70 per cent houses were destroyed or damaged in Uatkania, Lohavara, Chandnaish, Boakhali, Fatikchhari, Raozan, Sandwip and Rangunia

Reuter adds: The navy and other rescue ships were struggling to reach remote islands in the Bay of Bengal, battered by the cyclone and swamped by water. It quoted officials as saying 20,000 people were missing.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi President R. Venkataraman and Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar today expressed sorrow over the loss of lives and suffering caused by the severe cyclonic storm.

In his message to the acting President of Bangladesh Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Mr. Venkataraman said "our heart goes out to the people of Bangladesh in their hour of tribulation" and asked the Bangladesh President to accept the Indian people and his "deepest sympathy".

The Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, in his message, to his Bangladeshi counterpart expressed "deep distress" at the loss of lives and widespread devastation caused by the cyclone.

Over 50,000 killed in Bangladesh cyclone

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, May 1.

At least 50,000 people are feared dead in a devastating cyclonic storm and tidal surge which battered almost the entire coastline of Bangladesh, especially the Chittagong region on Monday night. According to unofficial reports, the toll may rise further. (A PTI report said the toll has crossed one lakh.)

However, the official BSS news agency put the figure at 30,000, quoting the Communications Minister, Mr. Oli Ahmed, who is guiding the relief and rescue operation in the worst-hit areas of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and several islands of the Bay.

The agency said about 25,000 people may have been killed in Sandwip, Uricchar, Banskhali, Sitakunda, Anwara, Patenga and Halisahar areas of the Chittagong port city during the storm.

Mr. Ahmed, who flew over Chakoria, Cox's Bazar and other islands including Kutubdia also said more than 2,000 people died in Chittagong area alone. The Minister, who hails from Chittagong, feared the toll might cross 50,000.

One crore affected

About one crore people have been badly affected in the storm that ravaged 47 coastal upazilas in 16 districts of the country, the State Minister for Relief, Mr. Lutkar Rahman told newsmen tonight. He said most of the areas were still under water and 90 to 95 per cent of the houses were washed away.

The casualty figure keeps increasing with passing time as the relief and rescue workers are engaged in round-the-clock operations. Bangladesh television crews who overflowed the coastal

islands of Banskhali, Kutubdia, Uricchar, Hatiya and Sandwip in helicopters, saw a completely lifeless area, where only a few pucca buildings were saved. Relief officials said thousands of people may have drowned in the Bay.

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, tried in vain to land in those places which were believed to have been totally washed away.

Thousands of mutilated bodies and dead cattle could be seen scattered in vast tracts of the coastal area from the helicopters.

Mass graves

A pall of gloom engulfed the nation as hundreds of victims were being buried in mass graves.

With the partial restoration of the telecommunications system, the news of more and more deaths are pouring into the capital from far-flung areas, which remained inaccessible during the last two days.

233-kmph gales: The cyclone slammed the coastal areas of the country at a speed of 233 kmph. This was the severest storm to hit Bangladesh during the last 20 years. A cyclone on November 12, 1970 had left one million people dead.

Several foreign ambassadors who also visited some of the affected areas today by helicopter, reported horrifying tales of death and devastation.

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, has appealed to the international community to come forward to help the people of Bangladesh. In an appeal she said that the Government had taken all precautionary measures which had minimised the loss of human lives. But the loss was huge

and perhaps on an unprecedented scale. The Government had mobilised all its manpower and resources and already launched a massive relief operation. But the magnitude of the damage was such that it might be impossible for the Government alone to meet the challenge and mitigate the sufferings of the people, she added.

Due to lack of communications with the battered areas, the supply of essential commodities, including medicare, could not be rushed. Immediate airdropping of food, water purifying tablets, safety matches, salt and life-saving drugs in the remote coastal areas is urgently needed, although relief operations by the government and non-government agencies are on. Contingents of Army, Navy and Air Force have already been deployed to help the people.

The U.S. Government has provided medical supplies worth \$2 millions, which include emergency medicines, surgical instruments and other accessories.

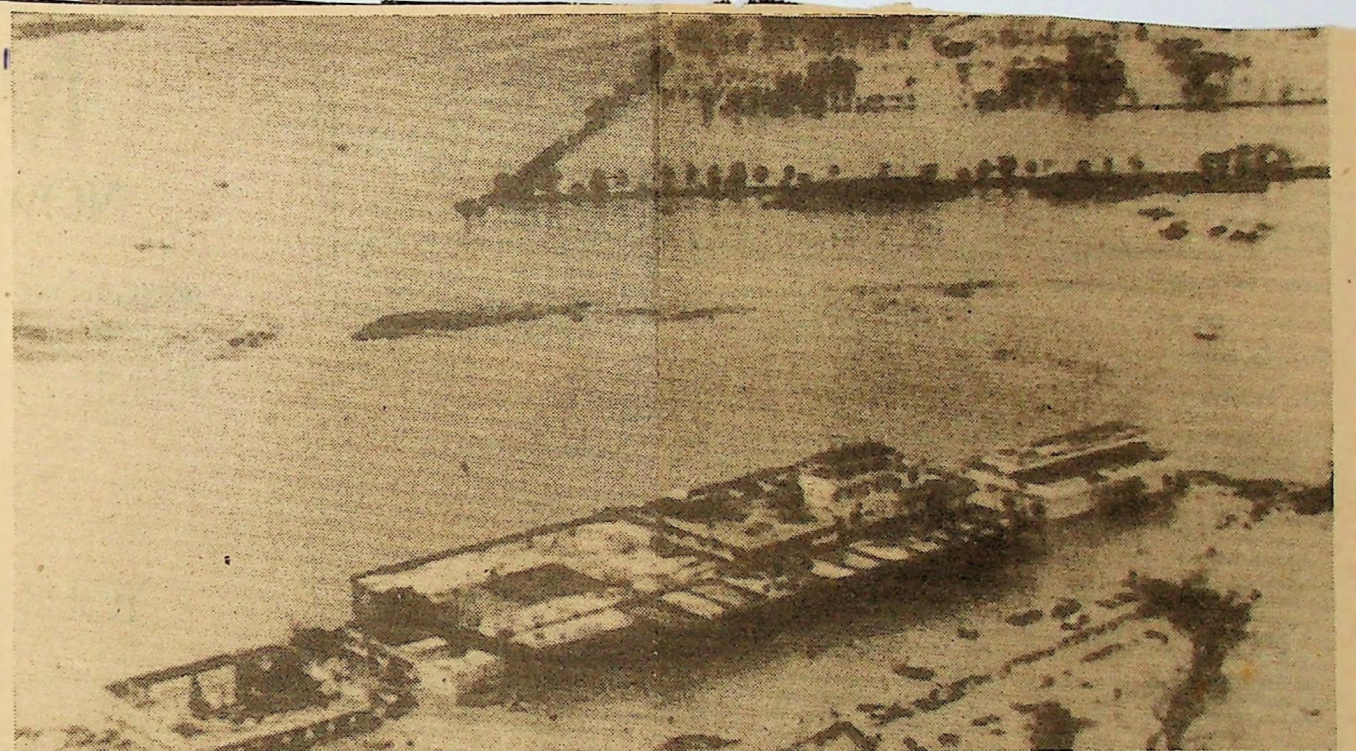
The two-decade old cyclone preparedness programme (CPP) worked effectively in minimising the loss of life. Timely messages of the meteorological office relayed to the coastal areas led to the movement of over 3.5 lakh people from storm and surge-prone areas to the 300 cyclone shelters built recently.

PM's distress

The Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, expressed deep distress over the tragic loss of lives and widespread devastation caused by the cyclone in Bangladesh.

In a message to Begum Zia, he conveyed India's heartfelt sympathy to those affected by this natural calamity.

Hinder
L.S.41



The south-eastern port city of Chittagong in Bangladesh is submerged in water as a strong typhoon hit the densely populated coastal area on Tuesday. Over 5,000 people died and millions were left homeless as 20 ft. (6 metre) high waves pounded the low-lying coast and howling winds razed dwellings.— AP/PTI

Hinder 1.5.91

Cyclone leaves over 1300 dead

From Haroon Habib

DHAKA, April 30

A powerful cyclone accompanied by strong tidal waves which struck almost the entire coastline of Bangladesh on Monday night is feared to have killed hundreds of people and caused extensive damage to houses and properties. Initial reports said over 1,300 people have been killed.

The latest figures of human casualty received from various affected areas and from various sources said that the Cox's Bazar area itself lost 551 people, 193 were killed in Noakhali, 55 in Bhola, seven in Barguna and four in Laxipur. About a hundred people were killed in Char-fashion island. While the above break up of casualty was announced by the Bangladesh television, it is expected that the toll may shoot up

Air Force helicopters which flew from Dhaka

and other bases early today to assess the extent of damage, could not land in the worst-hit areas such as Swandip, Urirchar, Feni and Noakhali as they remained under water. Officials and photographers saw from air thousands of people taking shelter on the rooftops and trees. Bodies of the victims were also seen around Swandip and Urirchar.

2,000 fishermen missing: Official sources said that several hundred fishing boats with nearly 2,000 fishermen are yet to return to shore in Cox's Bazar area. Thousands of houses had been flattened or blown away by the strong wind that damaged the country's largest ground satellite station in Betunia, disrupting communication with other ports of the world.

The storm started to batter the coastal belts on Monday evening with low lying areas including the islands going under strong wind and tidal

surge. The intensity gradually increased and the cyclone with core of hurricane speed winds of up to 235 km/h in gusts and squalls battered the entire coastline from Satkhira to Teknaf.

The port city of Chittagong, which is not normally affected by such catastrophe, was affected badly with most of the city areas going under water.

An Air Force helicopter with the Air Chief, Air Vice Marshal Komtazuddin Ahmed, managed to land near the Chittagong airport this noon and carried back reports of extensive damage to the airport and aircraft there.

According to unofficial estimates, about seven million people in the coastal areas have been affected in the districts. The storm also breached embankments and submerged many areas of the world's largest mangrove forest of Sundarbans killing hundreds of deer and tigers.

1,200 killed as cyclone hits Bangla

DHAKA, April 30. (UNI) — About 1,200 people were killed and several thousands missing as a devastating cyclone struck the southern coast of Bangladesh today.

About seven million coastal dwellers were affected and thousands of huts damaged when the cyclone with a windspeed of 235 km crossed the Chittagong Cox-Bazar area near Meghna estuary at 0300 hours.

State-owned television said at least 700 people were killed in Noakhali and Cox-Bazar districts. It said the death toll could rise as more reports of devastation come from the interior islands.

The storm, the severest in recent state.

D11 2.5.91

Tripura hit

Continued from Page 1

memory, snapped telecommunication link with the outside world as the Betbunia satellite system collapsed under the impact of the cyclone. In all 14 districts were hit.

Government officials could not immediately ascertain the extent of the damage to human lives and properties but unofficial reports indicated the damage was likely to be of a very high magnitude.

TRIPURA HIT: Meanwhile, the cyclonic storm lashed Tripura today, leaving a trail of destruction causing extensive damage throughout the state.

According to official sources in Agartala, the most affected areas are Belonia, Sabroom and Amarpur subdivisions of south Tripura district. Standing crops and property worth several crores of rupees are feared damaged. Reports of devastation are still pouring in.

SAUDI SHIP RESCUED: Battle-ships of the Indian Navy were today towing to safety a drifting Saudi flag vessel "MV Majid II" caught in a severe cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal, according to reports reaching the naval headquarters here.

Naval helicopters had lowered a medical team on board the Saudi vessel on charter with the Andaman and Nicobar Island administration, to look after 782 persons on board the vessel including a crew of 62.

The ship was caught in a severe cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal on Sunday night and lost contact with the shore.