

Cyclone situation report No. 2, dated 17 November 2007

SIDR killed over 1,000 people

Tropical cyclone SIDR ripped through the southern coast late Thursday, killing over 1,000 people and demolishing houses, crops, vegetables and trees alike along its trail of devastation over an area of thousands of square kilometers, according to media reports this morning (17 November 2007). Many people including poor fisherman who ignored the weather warning and went out to sea are still missing.

Government of Bangladesh has taken all possible steps to face the situation. Several central control rooms were activated by different agencies at national, district and upazila levels. So far 2,168 shelters have been opened and near about 1.5 million people were evacuated to safe places. The shelters are supported by medical teams, medicines and dry food. Before the cyclone hit the coastal belt local government warned the people through the public address system and advised them to take refuge in public shelters such as cyclone shelters, school buildings etc. NGOs and local volunteers worked together to face the disaster. (**source: Disaster Management Bureau <http://www.cdmp.org.bd>**)

After visiting the cyclone-hit areas yesterday, Chief Adviser (head of the interim caretaker government) Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed asked the authorities concerned to take urgent steps to meet the need of the affected people. He also asked them to take necessary steps for the burial of dead bodies. The Chief Adviser announced allocation of Tk 1 crore (10 million taka) for each worst affected District in Khulna Division. UN bodies, European Union and NGOs yesterday disbursed emergency relief aid and started distributing relief materials among the victims. European Commission in Brussels said it disbursed 1.5 million Euros (US\$ 2.2 million) in emergency relief aid to Bangladesh. United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) started distributing 98 metric tons of ready food from its emergency stock to feed about 400,000 victims.

The cyclone caused the country's power system to collapse completely yesterday morning, triggering a knock-on effect on piped water supplies, telecommunication and filling station operations. In addition to suffering the miseries inflicted by the lack of power and water supplies, people spent a day amid increasing tension and uncertainty. Disruptions to Internet connections, mobile phone network and television broadcast worsened things further. The state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) in the country's 36 years of history had to suspend its transmission for the first time for nearly three hours yesterday due to power outage. However, power supply has been restored from early this morning in the capital city while the cyclone-affected coastal areas are still without electricity.

Around 95 percent standing crops in 11 coastal Districts have been affected badly by the cyclone. Economists fear the SIDR would take its toll on the livelihood of ultra poor people, with rising inflation. Environmentalists and biodiversity experts fear immense loss to the Sundarbans and its wildlife, as the brunt of cyclone SIDR was borne by the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans. Some experts said they fear many wildlife including tigers, deer, crocodiles, wild boars, king cobras and monkeys might

have been washed away and perished under the weight of uprooted trees of the world natural heritage site. It will take weeks to assess the actual death toll and total loss.

The cyclonic storm of hurricane strength, SIDR was one of the 10 fiercest cyclones that hit the region of Bangladesh in the 131 years between 1876 and 2007. SIDR was considered as fierce a cyclone as the ones that hit the country in 1970 and 1991 killing 500,000 and 140,000 people respectively.

Major storms since 1822

Chronology of major storms that hit Bangladesh in different periods since 1822.

May 1822: A cyclone, accompanied by storm surge, hit Barisal, Hatiya Island and Noakhali, claiming lives of about 40,000 people.

October 31, 1876: A cyclone with a storm surge of 40 ft above the normal astronomical tide hit Meghna river estuary near Chittagong, Barisal and Noakhali, leaving about 200,000 people dead.

October 30-31, 1960: A severe cyclonic storm hit Chittagong, Noakhali, Bakerganj, Faridpur, Patuakhali and eastern Meghna estuary at a speed of 210 km per hour, leaving about 10,000 people killed.

May 9, 1961: A severe cyclonic storm at a speed of 161 km per hour hit Bagerhat and Khulna, leaving about 11,468 people killed (mostly in char Alexander).

May 28-29, 1963: A severe cyclonic storm lashed Chittagong, Noakhali, Cox's Bazar and coastal islands of Sandwip, Kutubdia, Hatiya and Moheshkhali, killing about 11,520 people.

November 12, 1970: A cyclone hit the entire coast of Bangladesh with a maximum wind speed of 222 km per hour. The official death toll was 500,000, but the unofficial figure was about 1,200,000.

May 24-25, 1985: A severe cyclone hit Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali and coastal islands leaving about 11,069 people killed.

April 29-30, 1991: A cyclone hit Bangladesh at late night of April 29. The storm originated in the Pacific Ocean and reached the Bay of Bengal coast after 20 days. The maximum wind speed reached 225 km per hour. Official death toll was 150,000. (Source: *The Daily Star*, 16 November 2007)

We shall keep you informed with latest developments.

Sabrina Sharmin
Communications Manager
RDRS Bangladesh