



PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release

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ECHO SIGNS CONTRACT WITH UNDP FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MAHALCHARI

Dhaka: The European Commission, through its Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), has contributed 762,000 Euro (approximately 54 Million Taka) towards a 1.2 million US dollar humanitarian assistance project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in favour of the population of nine villages in Mahalchari, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

A signing ceremony to mark the ECHO contribution took place earlier today at the Delegation of the European Commission in the presence of Mr Jorgen Lissner, UNDP Resident Representative and Ambassador Esko Kentrschynskyj, Head of the EC Delegation.

The Mahalchari Humanitarian Assistance Programme is a UN inter-agency relief effort spearheaded by UNDP, also involving the World Food Programme and UNICEF. It aims to restore family and community livelihoods in the villages affected by the violent events in Mahalchari on 26 August 2003. These events left the villages almost totally burnt down and 433 families with little more than the clothes they were wearing that day. Immediate assistance, including distribution of food and seeds, has already been provided under the project in order to augment the response made by the Government of Bangladesh, NGOs and community support groups following the 26 August events.

Further activities under the UNDP project include provision of shelter, health, water and sanitation, as well as other basic humanitarian aid to restore the shattered lives of the 433 families. The project has also received financial contributions from Australia, Denmark, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the United Kingdom.

ECHO is a service of the European Commission under the responsibility of Commissioner Poul Nielson. It is one of the world's major humanitarian aid donors and provided in 2003 more than 600 million Euro in over 100 countries in response to natural and manmade disasters. ECHO channels its contributions through NGOs, the UN system and the Red Cross family. ECHO also supports disaster preparedness activities in many countries, including Bangladesh.

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own development solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop their local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and its wide range of partners.

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