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Climate Change Battle

\$1,149m sought from donors

Staff Correspondent

The government yesterday sought \$1,149 million global assistance for mitigating the impact of natural disasters on a long-term basis, especially in the coastal districts which are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

“We appealed for assistance from the international community mainly for construction of embankments, cyclone shelters and cluster villages for the landless people,” Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque said while briefing newsmen at his ministry.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni also spoke at the briefing following a meeting with the diplomats of various countries including the US, UK, European Union, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, and representatives of the World Bank, IMF, UN missions and global NGOs.

At the meeting, the development partners were apprised of the losses caused by Cyclone Aila that hit the country on May 25, and the measures that should be taken for mid-term and long-term solutions.

The cyclone killed 190 people, damaged over five lakh houses, around 1,400 km of embankments, crops on about 3.5 lakh acres of land, around 5,000 educational and other institutions, 8,800 km of roads and 157 bridges and culverts.

Of the \$1,149 million assistance sought yesterday, \$435 million is for cluster villages for landless people, \$381 million for reconstruction of houses, \$62 million for reconstruction of embankments, \$56 million for restoration of livelihood, \$200 million for building cyclone shelters, \$12 million for displaced people and \$3 million for restoration of water supply systems.

Razzaque said climate change is causing disasters with increasing intensity. Aila had a speed of 80 to 90 km per hour and whipped up a devastating tidal surge, he mentioned.

But the government faced the disaster with domestic resources, and did not seek global help at that time, he said. “It was actually our strategy.”

The minister said, “We wanted to take development partners' help for permanent solutions. So, we now seek their help.”

In reply to a question about response to the appeal, he said donors' representatives present at yesterday's meeting would now write to their governments or their headquarters.

“But some of them said the assistance they gave following the cyclone Sidr in 2007 was not best utilised. We told them there was a special type of government (caretaker government) at that time, but we are an elected government, and we will certainly best utilise any funds,” Razzaque said.

Dipu Moni said Bangladesh is among the worst victims of climate change, and has a moral right to claim assistance to face disasters.

Replying to question, the foreign minister said the meeting did not discuss the issue of a compensation for climate change. “The developed world must cut carbon emission, and their fund to mitigate impact of climate change must be adequate.”

Asked if the donors kept their aid commitments following Sidr, she said many of them surely kept.

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