

Media publicity on "Aila" cyclone relief communications, West Bengal

THE  HINDU

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NIAR team takes part in relief work

Staff Reporter

VISAKHAPATNAM: A team from National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR), Hyderabad, has been participating in relief operations in West Bengal hit by cyclone Aila in the last week of May.

Ham radio stations have been set up at Barasat District Magistrate Office, Barasat Circuit House, Dhanekhali, Dulduli, Sandeshkhali, Hingalgunj Block Development Office, Jogesganj, Kalitala of North 24 Parganas District and Rangabelia of South 24 Paraganas District with relay stations at NIAR, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Belur and Kerala and other places across India, according to Arya Ghosh, a life member of NIAR.

Mr. Ghosh said he had spoken to the West Bengal Minister of State for Civil Defence Srikumar Mukherjee and told him about the role Ham radio operators could play in the relief operations. A team from NIAR, Hyderabad, had met the minister at Kolkata on June 2 and provided the necessary support to operate from various cyclone-hit parts.

Ham radio operation is pursued as a hobby after obtaining licence by passing an examination conducted by the Ministry of Communications of the Government of India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

HAM radio team tunes into relief work

1 Jun 2009, 0354 hrs IST, Suman Chakraborti, TNN

KOLKATA: A three-member team of the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR) will reach the city by Monday night with HAM radio equipment to help the state government in relief work. The team has been requested by the state government to set up makeshift radio stations in the flood-affected areas of South and North 24-Parganas.

NIAR director Ram Mohan said they had received a letter from the North 24-Parganas district magistrate's office, asking them to send HAM radio equipment to the flood-affected areas of the district to help them in conducting relief and rescue work.

"We received a letter from the additional DM of North 24-Parganas to assist them in the flood-affected areas of the district. We are immediately sending a team to Kolkata with satellite radio equipment," said Ram Mohan.

He added that since a week has passed since the storm Aila hit the state, they were not quite informed as to the present situation. "We have been informed that the situation in some of the flood-affected places of the district has improved a little. We are trying to keep in touch with the district administration to keep us informed on the present situation. Nevertheless, we are sending our team and equipment," Ram Mohan said.

HAM radio expert Ambarish Nag Biswas, who has been selected as one of the coordinators to monitor the temporary radio stations, said they would help the government keep track of the present situation. "Apart from informing those who are engaged in rescue and relief work as to where people might still be stranded, we would be able to keep track as to whether any outbreak of disease occurs or whether anybody goes missing. These problems occur when the water level starts receding. We would subsequently be able to inform the DM immediately so that they can take quick action. We have been asked to set up these temporary radio stations at Dhamakhali, Kultoli and Sandeshkhali and we would have to move on as per situation," Biswas said.

Two others Parag Ranjan Das and Subhadip Chatterjee would also be in the team. The team will use VHF and HF frequency to keep track of the situation. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Kolkata-/HAM-radio-team-tunes-into-relief-work/articleshow/4601551.cms>)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Relief workers bogged down by fatigue

3 Jun 2009, 0417 hrs IST, Suman Chakraborti, TNN

KOLKATA: Relief workers, who got down to work a day after Cyclone Aila hit, are showing signs of fatigue. This is resulting in the uneven distribution of relief materials in the flood-affected areas like Sandeshkhali.

The teams are working hard, but still failing to distribute relief equally at places where they have managed to reach. As a result, while some victims have received relief materials repeatedly, many are yet to get anything at all.

Officials keeping track of relief distribution through the HAM radio network have informed authorities about the relief workers tiring out. A fresh batch of workers are being sent to the affected areas.

Officials keeping track of relief distribution said the teams moving around on speedboats in the worst-affected areas were getting puzzled. "Some families are managing to collect relief materials repeatedly while there are many, particularly the elderly and children, who are not receiving relief at all. This is either because they are reaching late or have got stranded far away from relief distribution points. It is practically not possible for relief workers to keep a continuous check on who receives the materials repeatedly and who are being deprived," said an official.

Members of the National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR) reached the city on Monday night with equipment to assist the relief workers. "They are on standby and we would take their help according to the situation. We are moving along with the

medical team in the affected areas like Dhaniakhali, Dulduli, Nebukhali, Hathgacha and also in various places in Sandeshkhali-I and II," said Ambarish Nag Biswas, one of the coordinators keeping track of the situation on the HAM radio network.

The HAM radio coordinators said it would have been helpful if they had been provided with some funds to work with. "We are spending our own money to work in the affected areas," said an official. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Kolkata-Relief-workers-bogged-down-by-fatigue/articleshow/4610733.cms>)

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The Telegraph
calcutta, india

Radio hams to rescue

Amitabh Bachchan is one. So is Rahul Gandhi. And we aren't talking politics or films.

They are radio hams — amateur radio operators who facilitate a two-way communication using radio waves. Most radio hams have full-fledged jobs and ham only as a hobby. One needs to clear an examination and get a licence to become a radio ham. During a disaster, radio hams can play a vital task in helping the administration with the relief operation by opening up a second line of communication.

Twelve radio hams are trying to reach out to Aila-afflicted areas of Bengal. "Radio hams have helped in disaster management after the Orissa cyclone and the Gujarat earthquake too," said Arya Ghosh, a life member of the National Institute of Amateur Radio in Hyderabad.

After consultation with civil defence minister Srikumar Mukherjee, a number of ham stations have been set up since June 1 in North 24-Parganas (Barasat, Dhanekhali, Dulduli, Sandeshkhali, Jogesganj) and South 24-Parganas (Rangabelia) with relay stations at the institutes in Hyderabad, Calcutta, Belur and Kerala.

During disaster management, radio hams set up a station and keep track of inaccessible areas. "Communication can save many lives. Radio hams are in constant touch with the district administration and keep officials updated about the situation," said Ghosh. Another such group is the Indian Wave of Amateur Radio, whose members were able to establish communication with Aila victims in the ravaged villages of Gosaba, South 24-Parganas.

"A 19-member team reached Gosaba on May 26, a day after the cyclone. Their job is to determine which remote areas need drinking water, food and medical supervision. They inform the local people or the district administration through other ham stations in centrally located areas," says Malay Mukherjee, a member of the group. (http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090607/jsp/calcutta/story_11069221.jsp)