

500,000 evacuated as Cyclone Bulbul makes landfall in Bangladesh



Bangladeshi passengers cover themselves with a plastic sheet and umbrellas as they cross the Buriganga River by boat during Cyclone Bulbul in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Saturday. Photo by Monirul Alam/EPA-EFE

Nov. 9 (UPI) — Bangladeshi authorities ordered about 500,000 people to evacuate

ahead of Cyclone Bulbul, which made landfall at midnight Saturday night.

The storm, which is also known as Tropical Cyclone Matmo, made landfall in the world's largest mangrove forest between Bangladesh and India. The cyclone had estimated sustained winds of 92 and gusts of 115 mph, according to the U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center. In the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, a Category 1 storm's sustain wind range from 96 mph to 110 mph.

Airports and seaside ports were shut down ahead of the storm. Indian authorities put military ships and planes on standby to assist with emergencies.

About 500,000 have been evacuated from the coastal region of Bangladesh ahead of the storm, according to Enamur Rahman, a minister of Bangladesh's Disaster Management and Relief.

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"We have taken all measures and people from coastal area ... they have been moved to the cyclone shelters," Rahman said Saturday.

Local volunteers helped spread awareness in the community and armed forces provided security.

Officials suspended operations at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong due to the storm, Rahman added. Kolkata Airport operations were also suspended.

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The Indian Meteorological Department classified Bulbul as a severe cyclonic storm with maximum sustained winds of about 68 mph to nearly 75 mph — similar to a tropical storm or Category 1 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale.

The National Disaster Response Force and the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force began to clear uprooted trees to allow traffic to flow in affected areas.

Around 3,000 people were evacuated so far from low-lying coastal areas in the state of Odisha, officials said.

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