

Flood Relief in Pakistan

The recent floods that raged through Pakistan have caused devastation of enormous proportions for a country that, as recent as 2005, saw a destruction from another natural disaster, earthquake. The human and economic toll has been massive. The country's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), supported by the Pakistan Army has been working 24/7 to provide rescue and relief to the affected people that are spread all along the major rivers in the country. The civil society is also mobilizing to help in any way they can by providing food, shelter, medicines, water, and above all moral support.

The magnitude of the population and area affected by the flooding dwarfs the affects of other disasters of recent times such as, Katrina Cyclone USA (2005), Nargis Cyclone of Myanmar (2008), or Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004).

	Pakistan Flood	Katrina Cyclone	Nargis Cyclone	Indian Ocean Tsunami
Population Affected	*14,571,885	500,000	2,420,000	2,273,723
Area Affected (Sq. Km)	*132,000		23,500	
Est. Economic Damage (Million US\$)	tbd	125,000	4,000	7,791

*Figures based on initial assessments

Raza Jafar, CEO of Emirates Investment Goup, and a prominent member of the Global Philanthropists Circle had to go to his native country and determine how he and the Circle that he is part of can act. He had to be on the ground to see the damage and feel the pain of the people affected.

First stop was to see Lt. Gen (Retd.) Athar Ali Shah, Secretary Defence, at the Ministry of Defence headquarters which has the Army, Navy, and Airforce deploying all the resources at their disposal building temporary bridges, rescuing people stranded in water, flying choppers and Hercules aircrafts sorties to provide relief. He then met with the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) who briefed Raza on the damage done and the challenges ahead in rebuilding the infrastructure and limiting the adverse health impacts through water borne diseases that are likely to emerge. "The magnitude of disaster is beyond comprehension", said the CGS.

Meeting with Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nadeem Ahmed, head of the NDMA, was only possible late in the evening. In the short period since the NDMA was formed after the 2005 earthquake Gen Nadeem has become an expert in disaster management. The situation room located in the Prime Minister's Secretariat where real time information and statistics are transmitted from the provincial and district centres set up across the country. Gen. Nadeem along with his team spends 16 - 18 hours a day managing and directing the field operations.

Raza joined a delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) to visit the valley of Swat which was one of the first areas that were ravaged by the flood. In recent times Swat valley, famous for its natural beauty, has been much in the news for the military action against the Taliban who had infested the area and terrorized the peace loving people of the valley. Army was finally able to clear the area after intensive action and for the first time in many years the tourists were back and enjoying the serene Kalam deep in the vale. The visit to Kalam was an eye opener. Army aviation's Helicopter took off from Islamabad at 7:30 AM. ADB's delegation headed by its Director General, Juan Miranda, accompanied. The ADB team was to meet with the President of Pakistan immediately after the trip to announce a USD 2 Billion flood relief fund that has been approved as an immediate help to the country.

At the end of the 4 hour aerial survey with a brief stop at the field headquarters of the Army's 7th Division, Raza recalled CGS's yesterday's comment and thought to himself, "how true, I would never have been able to imagine the disaster if I had not decided to come by myself".

Bridges have been washed away with Kalam completely cut off from the main valley stranding over 400,000 people who have to be provided food, water, and medicines to survive. Over 60% of the hotels that straddled the bank of river Swat have been washed away.

On the ground heart rending stories abound. One is of a young bride-to-be who was left inside a room by her brothers because the water came so rapidly & ferociously that they ran out for their life. The hut did not withstand the current and the young girl was swept along while the brothers helplessly stood by. Another tells of a mother who, upon learning of the ensuing danger, evacuated the family in time but went back to lock up the house. Then came the water so swiftly that the hapless woman stood no chance. The family is left behind to mourn the loss.

Pakistan, still recovering from the financial loss of 2005 earthquake, will be building the infrastructure and resettling the flood victims for a years to come. Financial assistance notwithstanding.









Raza Jafar (Left) & Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nadeem Ahmed (Right)



Juan Miranda, Director General ADB (Third Left) & Raza Jafar (Fourth Left)