

# Supplies Running Low For Besieged Biharis

NARAYANGANJ, Bangladesh, Dec. 30 (AP)—Food and medical supplies dwindled to desperate levels today for 30,000 beleaguered Biharis inside the world's largest jute mill. The International Red Cross said it is unable to offer immediate aid.

Laurent Marti, the Red Cross mission director, told a news conference in nearby Dacca that he could not send in help without the consent of the Bangladesh government, and his statement indicated the approval had not come.

"I would not dare give you an estimate of when help will arrive," Red Cross spokesman Peter Kuhn told newsmen. "But we are convinced the government is aware of their situation and will act very soon."

The controversy about the plight of the Bihari minority—two million persons in the predominantly Bengali nation of 75 million—brought an angry response tonight from the Bangladesh government.

A statement issued by Education Minister Yusuf Ali said allegations that minorities are being harassed and deprived of food and other essential supplies "are false, baseless and malicious."

Ali said the Biharis at the Adamjee Jute mill in Narayanganj were being provided relief, but newsmen who visited the vast compound found no evidence of it.

A medical officer reported that four children have starved and seven persons have died of suspected cholera in the two weeks since Bangladesh was born and the Biharis locked themselves inside the mill to escape reprisals by the Bengalis. The mill is guarded by a company of 100 Indian troops.

During nine months of Pakistan army operations against the Bengali-dominated Awami League, the Bihari community generally sided with the army. The Bengalis called it collaboration, and since Dacca fell they have taken revenge liberally.

The jute mill has been closed and the Biharis without salaries for a month.

Hollow-eyed women and children sat listlessly outside their one-room workers dwellings today while their menfolk tried to sell meager belongings to buy food.

There is no widespread starvation. Around crowded hovels, traders within the community bring in rice for those with enough money left to buy.