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PM visits DND dam, flood-hit Munshiganj

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited the DND embankment and some areas of Munshiganj district to see the extent of damage caused by devastating flood, reports UNB.

She praised the united efforts of the people in protecting the DND (Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra) embankment and said man can overcome great problems through mental strength and will.

Through united effort, you protected the embankment and saved huge people and area from the swelling water," Hasina said addressing a gathering at Chashara Rail Station in Narayanganj in the morning.

The Prime Minister started her journey early in the morning and visited different areas of the DND embankment, including Siddhirganj bridge, Godnail and Chashara.

Local people and army personnel are jointly working day and night to protect the 32 km embankment, placing sand bags at different vulnerable points.

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Work unitedly to save flood victims: Khaleda

Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the people to work unitedly to mitigate the sufferings of the flood victims, reports UNB.

"Pray to Almighty Allah. Only He can save us from this severe calamity," she said while briefly addressing a gathering near DND embankment at Sarulia Bazar in Demra thana in the afternoon.

Begum Zia said the people are passing their days in untold miseries as the flood situation across the country is worsening everyday.

She said prices of essentials have gone beyond buying capacity of the common people because of short supply caused by disruption of road and rail communications across the country.

The BNP chairperson called upon the countrymen to help the flood victims with whatever they have.

She thanked the army, officials and employees of Water Development Board and local people.

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Capital's rail links with Ctg, Sylhet restored

By Staff Correspondent
The capital's rail links with Chittagong, Sylhet, Comilla and Noakhali were restored via Mymensingh at 9:20 am yesterday, railway sources said.

The communication was snapped at around 5 am yesterday following cracks in the Shambhuganj bridge.

Additional Director General (Operations) of Bangladesh Railway, NM Khurshid Anower told The Daily Star yesterday that railway engineer raised the height of some one kilometre track by eight inches near Arikhola and Pabnal to restore Dhaka - Chittagong direct communication.

"We hope to restore direct communication by 5 pm today after operating a special train on the raised portion of the track," he added.

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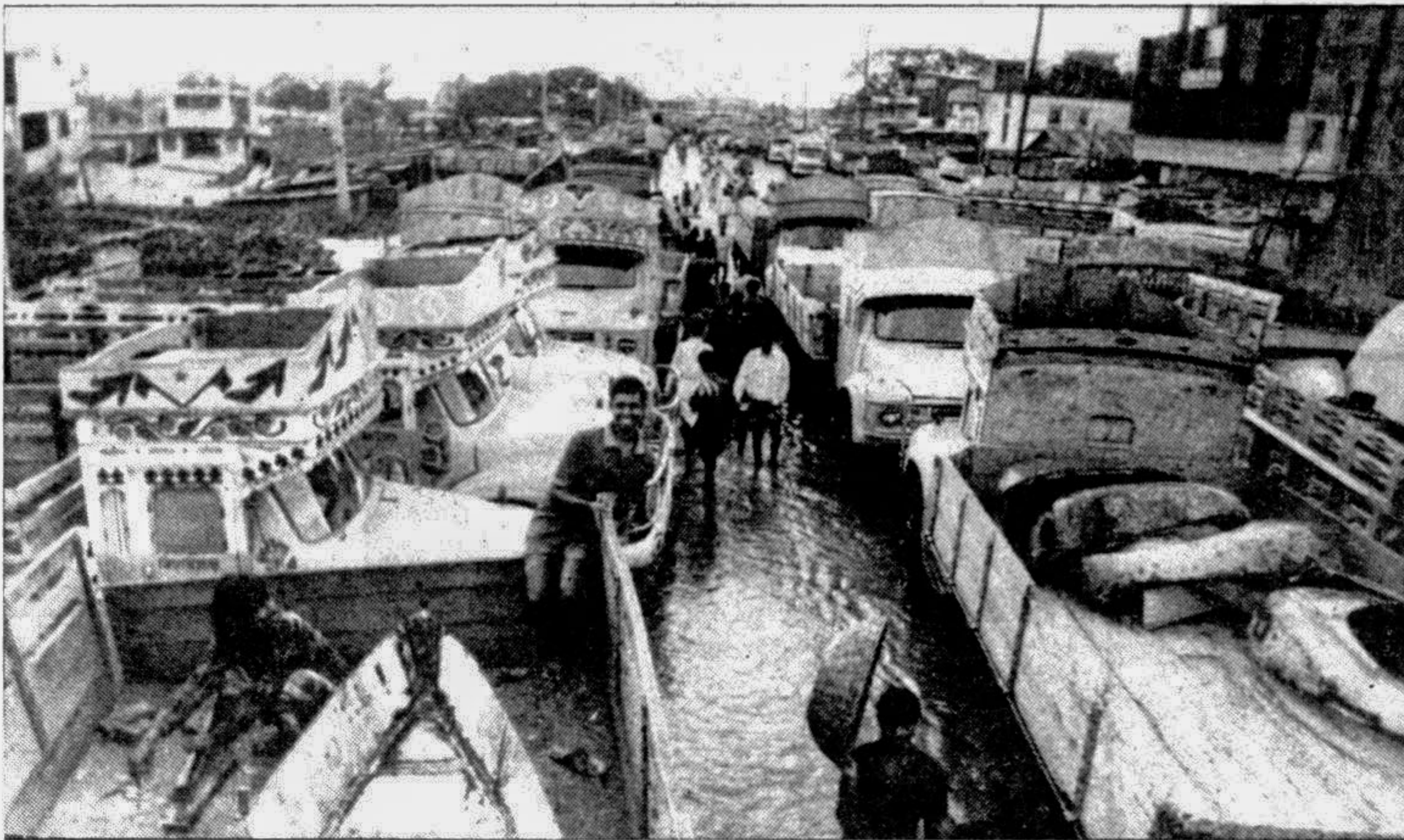
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Trucks remain stranded on the submerged Dhaka-Aricha road near Aminbazar in the city. The picture was taken yesterday. —Star photo

Situation in city to worsen further

Fresh flood in 3 dists

The flood situation in 16 central districts including Dhaka became 'extremely critical' yesterday while fresh flooding occurred in three other districts, report agencies.

The FFWC said the situation in and around the capital city may worsen further due to rise of water levels at different points of the river Buriganga.

The flood has already hit 71 wards of the city, damaging 75 per cent *kutcha* houses in the low-lying areas and affecting nearly two-thirds population of the Metropolis.

Fresh flood gripped Bagerhat, Chuadanga and Natore due to downpour and tidal effect.

The situation remained static in nine districts and in nine others showed slight improvement as water started to recede there.

Twenty-seven more deaths were reported from across the country in 24 hours raising the

flood-related death toll to 843 yesterday. The fresh deaths include seven from diarrhoea.

Apart from Dhaka where the flood situation deteriorated further yesterday are Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Madaripur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Gopalganj, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Chandpur and Laxmipur.

The situation remained static in Kishoreganj, Tangail, Naogaon, Gaibandha, Bogra, Brahmanbaria, Noakhali, Barisal and Kushtia districts.

The 9 districts where it marked improvement are Jamalpur, Sherpur, Netrakona, Kurigram, Pabna, Sirajganj, Narail, Comilla and Habiganj.

The 13 'flood-free' districts are: Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Bandarban, Feni, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Joypurhat and

Magura.

The FFWC officials said the major rivers of the country have fallen further during the last 24 hours ending at 9 am yesterday. It said the flood situation along the Brahmaputra-Jamuna river up to Aricha will continue to improve further, while the situation in the upstream of Padma is likely to improve further.

The situation in the Meghna up to Bhairab Bazar is likely to improve and the central part of the country is likely to improve slightly.

But the major rivers were still flowing above the danger marks at 21 points, out of the 46 stations regularly monitored by the centre.

Rivers flowing above red mark are Brahmaputra at Chilmari (3 cm), Jamuna at Bahadurabad (36 cm), Sirajganj (73 cm) and Aricha (149 cm). See Page 12 Col 6

Another leak in DND dam repaired

By Staff Correspondent

The fury of Buriganga and Shitalakya rivers seemed less yesterday.

The water level of Buriganga rose by eight cm yesterday against 13 cm on the day before and that of Shitalakya rose by only one cm against six cm, according to Flood Forecasting Centre.

But there has been no let up in the vigilance on the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra embankment. Thousands of people living inside the dam yesterday continued their round the clock vigil on it.

The DND embankment, which protects their homes, is being threatened by flood waters of the Buriganga and the Shitalakya for more than two months.

The people are helping the troops and civilian workers in plugging the leaks or reinforcing its vulnerable points with sandbags.

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Flood situation in West Bengal worsens

MIDNAPORE, Sept 11: The flood situation in West Bengal took a serious turn today with torrential rains lashing the coastal district of Midnapore, reports PTI.

District officials here said incessant rains have submerged low-lying areas of Digha, Egra, Parashpur, Nandigram, Contai and Haldia and whipped up the water level of major rivers.

Irrigation department sources said the water level of River Kangsabati crossed danger mark threatening Midnapore town while the rise in water level of Rupnarayan near Tamluk, Subarnarekha near Dantan and Bagri near Khakurda threatened to inundate adjoining areas.

No tetanus vaccine at DMCH

Star Report

Tetanus vaccine, used to treat injured persons, is not available at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for the last six weeks, hospital sources said.

"The injection is given to patients suffering from cut injuries. But as it is not available, we are compelled to ask attendants of the patients to buy it from local pharmacies," a doctor at the emergency wing of DMCH told this correspondent.

A nurse said that due to the problem, many patients were treated without the vaccine. "It is important to be vaccinated, a must for an injured to avoid attack from the deadly tetanus."

Another staff at the emergency wing said that the only age-old freezer to preserve the

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High tide in Bay slows recession of waters

By Shehab Ahmed

An unusually high tide in the Bay of Bengal, whipped up by a low, has held back floods in the country from receding, an expert at the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said yesterday.

"The high tides have slowed recession of floods... despite falling trend in some rivers contributing to the deluge," Sharif Raftul Islam, FFWC's Executive Engineer, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Since the full moon occurred on September 5, the sea has been experiencing an unusual surge which provided a sort of barrier to the flood water rolling into the Bay," Islam said.

Normally, the tide ebbs in two or three days after the full moon, but we are surprised at the exception," he said.

The tide height was measured at Chandpur, where the Ganges and the Brahmaputra joins the Meghna before going down to the Bay.

"On Thursday, the high tide was measured at a record 5.52

metres above the mean sea level and the low tide was 4.72 metres, slightly less the highest ever recorded level of 4.86 metres during the 1988 floods," he said.

"What caused the sea to behave unusually still remained unknown," he said. "This is under investigation... but we seem to be nowhere near a conclusion."

Sajedur Rahman, a senior meteorologist, said the high tide could be triggered by the "low" which formed over the Bay on September 8, reactivating the monsoon before moving towards the north western Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

"It (the low) triggered heavy pressure on the tide level, inundating low areas on the coasts which were not flooded," Rahman said.

"But this is not uncommon." The country experienced a similar situation during the monsoon in 1995 when heavy wind and high tide pushed surges further inland of Chandpur for

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Rubel murder case Judicial probe body may submit report tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The one man judicial commission probing the Rubel murder is likely to submit its report to the home ministry tomorrow, commission sources said.

Mukuli Begum, a neighbour of Rubel and a local Awami League leader, now under CID remand, continued denying till last night that she had influenced DB police to arrest Rubel.

Shamim Reza Rubel was arrested on July 23 and tortured to death in DB custody the same day.

Mukuli told the investigators that she was not acquainted with AC Akram or any other DB men, sources close to the investigators said.

The investigators told her that according to handwriting asked her about the opinion of finger experts, the 'chit' recov-

ered after Rubel's killing contained her handwriting, Mukuli replied. "Whatever your experts say, I did not write any 'chit' describing Rubel's address", one source said.

CID police arrested Mukuli on Wednesday from her Siddeswari residence in the city after handwriting experts confirmed that the handwriting on one side of the 'chit' was of Mukuli and that on the other side was of AC Akram.

The 'chit' was recovered from SI Hayatul Islam Thakur, an accused in the murder case. Thakur is now in Dhaka Central Jail.

Meanwhile, AC Akram Hossain, principal accused in the Rubel murder case, was taken to Dhaka Central Jail on Thursday from the prison cell of PG

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Special prayers were offered at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday seeking divine blessings to get rid of the devastating flood. —Star photo

\$76m WFP food aid

ROME, Sept 11: The United Nations Food Agency announced today a huge aid operation for the 20 million Bangladeshis, victims of unprecedented floods, reports AFP.

An estimated 76 million dollars worth of food will be provided and distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP), said an agency statement issued here.

In coming to the aid of up to 20 million people, the operation marks the largest-scale package yet mounted by the WFP.

This will include 352,400 tonnes of wheat, 3,500 varied products and 175 tonnes of dry biscuits for immediate distribution.

The flooding has prevented many of the millions from planting their yearly rice crops, due to be harvested in January.

The WFP estimates that food aid will be needed until this time.

It military exercise 50 US air force personnel arrive today

Some 50 US Air Forces personnel arrive here today to stage joint military exercise with Bangladesh Air Force and conduct relief operation in the flood-hit areas, reports UNB.

The two C-130 US aircraft along with the US troops will join the six-day exercise. An advance team of the US forces is already in the capital.

The exercise will focus on how to enhance the capability of Bangladesh to cope with natural disasters like flood and cyclone.

They will join rescue and relief operation in the flood-hit areas till September 17. Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman told the news agency yesterday.

After the 1991 devastating cyclone in Chittagong, the US naval forces conducted massive relief and rescue operation, code named 'operation Sea Angel'.

Mustafiz said another US chartered aircraft carrying relief materials will arrive in Dhaka today.

Three drown in flood water in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Sept 11: A mother with her child drowned in Charkalbari area near Shambuganj Jute Mills in Sadar thana this afternoon, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Firoza Begum, 35, along with her son Mazharul Islam, 7, drowned in flood water while they were returning to a flood shelter after collecting relief goods.

Local people sent their bodies to the thana health complex. Another minor boy, Sakil, 3, son of Afsar Uddin of Borochara village in Sadar thana, drowned in flood water today.

India ready to sign CTBT

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: India hinted today that it was prepared to sign on to a nuclear test ban, saying its objections have been met and that it was already adhering to the treaty, reports AP.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told reporters in the northern city of Lucknow that his decision to refrain from conducting further nuclear tests following a series in May amounted to "adherence to the nuclear test ban treaty in spirit."

"A final decision on signing the CTBT will be taken soon," Vajpayee said.

India has long objected that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty freezes the advantage Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States have gained by decades of testing. Now India, too, has been able to

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Duma okays Primakov as PM

MOSCOW, Sept 11: The Russian parliament overwhelmingly approved Yevgeny Primakov as prime minister today after he called on all political factions to unite behind his government and tackle the country's economic crisis, reports AP.

The Duma, the lower chamber of parliament, voted 317-63 to confirm Primakov, in a major show of support for the new government. He called for political stability, asking party leaders to give his government up to a year before deciding if it was succeeding or not.

"We need unity to come out of this very grave crisis," he told the hushed chamber.

"Do not expect to continue political confrontation," he added.

Congress votes to make Starr's report public via Internet

WASHINGTON, Sept 11: The House of Representatives voted today to beam worldwide a prosecutor's report that accuses President Bill Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice in the Monica Lewinsky affair, the first act in a potential impeachment drama, reports AP.

The House voted 363-63 to release the 445-page report later in the day via the Internet, a fashion unthinkable just a few years ago. It passed over the objections of some Democrats who argued it was unfair that Clinton didn't get a chance to

see it first.

Majority Republicans insisted they followed the letter of the law and didn't see any reason to give White House spin-meisters a chance to mount an advance public assault on the report's conclusions.

"Due process, fundamental fairness, will be observed," said Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde. "This whole proceeding will fall on its face if it's not perceived by the American people to be fair."

Despite the flareup of partisan tension, members of both

parties acknowledged the somber and historic nature of the day's proceedings.

"This communication from the independent counsel embarks this institution on a grave and profound process," Rep Gerald Solomon, the Rules Committee chairman. "There is no joy in bringing forward this resolution — only a sense of the gravity of our constitutional responsibilities."

Clinton began the day by delivering a solemn apology at a prayer breakfast, where he acknowledged 'I have sinned' and asked for forgiveness.

"It is important to me that everybody who has been hurt know that the sorrow that I feel is genuine — first and most important my family, also my friends, my staff, my cabinet, Monica Lewinsky and her family and the American people," Clinton said.

He said he would instruct his lawyers to mount a vigorous defense, using all available appropriate arguments, but legal language must not obscure the fact that I have done wrong."

Another staff at the emergency wing said that the only age-old freezer to preserve the

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