

# Fresh rains worsen flood situation in Andhra

HYDERABAD, India, Aug 27 : The worst floods in decades to ravage the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh worsened today as fresh rains lashed towns and villages and caused a second breach in a dam here, officials said, reports AFP.

The officials said swirling water from the breached Foxsagar reservoir was gushing towards an overflowing lake in the heart of the state capital Hyderabad.

The Foxsagar dam burst its walls a second time overnight forcing army and civil engineers to abandon efforts to plug the massive breach on the national reservoir, some 15 km from Hyderabad.

Officials said a 15-foot (4.5-metre) section of the dam exploded under pressure of water around 2:00 a.m. Sunday (2:30 BST Saturday) and 20 neighbouring residential districts

were immediately swamped.

Around 37,000 people living near Foxsagar were evacuated before the army retreated from the path of the gushing water, they said.

Sheets of water are heading towards Hussainsagar Lake which is already overflowing, a city official said, adding the situation has triggered panic in Hyderabad.

At least 131 people have died since Wednesday when the heaviest rains in 46 years began bursting this coastal state.

Andhra Pradesh state Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu told to allay fears of a catastrophe in Hyderabad and said the Foxsagar waters would cause much damage.

"My officials have told me that even when the discharge from Foxsagar reaches Hussainsagar it will be minimal and water level will only go up

by few inches so there is no need to panic," Naidu said.

The chief minister also urged residents to ignore rumours that the city centre reservoir was also on the verge of bursting its walls.

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As many as 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh have been severely affected by the flooding, with Guntur, Kurnool, Prakasam, Khamman and Rayalaseema among the worst hit.

The floods have also affected 2,886 villages and towns, and have submerged 177,987 hectares (439,627 acres) of farmland. The damage has been put at around 7.7 billion rupees (177 million dollars).

The collapse of the civic infrastructure in Hyderabad has prompted an outcry against computer-savvy chief minister Naidu's ambitions to turn it into India's largest cyber-city.

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Meanwhile, heavy rains slammed some of the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh as the downpour returned overnight after a brief respite, officials here said.

Hyderabad meteorological department chief K.V. Naidu warned of another wet spell.

A low pressure is moving in a southwesterly direction and in the next 24 hours coastal Andhra Pradesh can expect moderate to very heavy rainfall," the weather department



Workers repairing embankments with sand bags yesterday after the Foxsagar reservoir in the flood ravaged southern Indian city of Hyderabad, developed a second breach following fresh rains. Around 131 people have already died in the worst floods in decades to ravage the Southern Indian Andhra Pradesh.

—AFP photo

## Gusmao, Horta resign

DILI, East Timor, Aug 27 : East Timor's 24-year independence struggle came to a symbolic end today when its two most prominent figures resigned from the territory's leading resistance organisation, reports AFP.

Xanana Gusmao, 54, who for close to two decades was East Timor's top freedom fighter, announced he was quitting the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), of which he was president.

His vice-president, the CNRT's globe-trotting chief diplomat, Jose Ramos-Horta, also announced his withdrawal from CNRT, the organization which led East Timor's political struggle for independence from Indonesia.

Gusmao said it was time for younger people to take control of this impoverished, fledgling nation as it embarks on a new struggle to build an economically viable and politically stable democracy.

"We need renewed energy. We need new faces... to lead this process forward," Gusmao told about 350 delegates from political parties, and social organizations.

"Therefore, I withdraw myself from CNRT," Gusmao said

before he abruptly left the podium and returned to his chair beside Horta at the Dilis gymnasium that serves as congress headquarters.

His announcement comes three days before the territory celebrates the first-anniversary of the August 30 vote in which East Timorese overwhelmingly opted for independence from Indonesia, which invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975.

One week ago, Gusmao also quit as commander of the Falintil guerrilla army which he had led for more than 19 years.

Both announcements appear to remove him from any formal role in East Timor. As a member of CNRT, he sat with officials of the United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAET) on the National Consultative Council, a policy-making body for the territory which has been under UN administration since October.

Gusmao has been widely seen as a likely president for the new nation when elections are held, possibly in one year's time.

But in an interview with reporters on Saturday evening he said he doesn't want the country's top job.

## Suu Kyi refuses to bow out

### 4th day of stand-off drama

YANGON, Aug 27 : Aung San Suu Kyi's stand-off with Myanmar's military government on the outskirts of Yangon entered a fourth day today amid concerns she is being denied adequate supplies of food and water, reports AFP.

The Nobel laureate and more than a dozen members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) were halted Thursday as they set off for a party meeting in an outlying town, in defiance of a travel ban which confines her to the capital.

Aung San Suu Kyi refused to obey the junta's request to turn back and has now spent three uncomfortable days and nights in her car in the township of Dallah.

As food and water ran low, the NLD appealed for local people to bring supplies to the opposition leader and her entourage, but complained over the weekend that the military was blocking the deliveries.

"If the health of those being blocked be impaired by lack of food and water... this is the entire responsibility of those who have stopped them," the NLD central executive committee

said in a letter to the military regime.

"We demand that the blockade be immediately removed and the NLD leaders be allowed to proceed to their desired destination."

Diplomatic sources said Aung San Suu Kyi was unlikely to back down easily and that the situation could become extremely difficult if supplies were cut off.

"If the local people can't get water to them, then I would imagine things are getting pretty tricky," one said.

Although she is no longer under house arrest as she was between 1989 and 1995, Aung San Suu Kyi's movements are closely monitored by the military regime which has been in control of Myanmar in various guises since 1962.

The last attempt to test the restrictions was in August 1998, when she was barred from travelling to a meeting of provincial supporters.

She camped out in a minibus on a bridge northwest of Yangon in a tense 13-day confrontation that ended when she became ill and dehydrated.

## Lankan parties scramble to form pacts ahead of polls

COLOMBO, Aug 27 : Sri Lanka's political parties were

peace.

The bill was put on hold on

August 3 when the government

failed to muster the required

two thirds majority in parliament,

but Kumaratunga has

vowed to have it implemented

within two months of the Octo-

ber poll.

"It looks like the govern-

ment is changing its tact," said an Asian diplomat. "Instead of

putting the new constitution as

the main campaign issues, the

government may try to project a

more acceptable alternative."

Political sources said the

ruling People's Alliance (PA)

had clinched a deal with an ultra-

nationalist party, while the

main opposition and smaller

political groups were racing to

cut deals before nominations open Monday.

President Chandrika Ku-

maratunga's PA pact with the

right-wing MEP, or People's

United Front, has surprised

many analysts given the bitter

acrimony between the two par-

ties over the government's rad-

ical ethnic peace plan.

The shift in PA policy could

be influenced by the powerful

Buddhist clergy who have op-

posed the draft bill with an

open campaign against it, in-

cluding a hunger strike by a

monk.

The Buddhist clergy has al-

ready warned that the elections

could be violent as three people

were killed in poll-related

clashes in the past week. Sev-

eral more have been wounded.

Kumaratunga had been

to turn the October 10 poll into

a referendum on her political

plan which she believes will

end decades of ethnic bloodshed

that has claimed over 60,000

lives, but her party appears di-

vided on the issue.

Even as a strong opponent of

the devolution plan joined the

government Friday, a more in-

fluential Muslim party which

had ardently backed Ku-

maratunga's political package

quit the cabinet last week.

The Sri Lanka Muslim

Congress (SLM), which re-

signed from Kumaratunga's

government Tuesday, said it

could not remain in the gov-

ernment due to differences with

another cabinet minister.

SLM leader M.H.M. Ashraf

had issued an ultimatum to

Kumaratunga to expel Trans-

port Minister A.H.M. Fowzie.

## Militants blow up newspaper office in Manipur

NEW DELHI, Aug 27 : Two armed militants evacuated a newspaper office and set off a powerful bomb in India's insur-

gency-ridden northeast Saturday, a week after an editor's killing, a domestic news agency reported, says AP.

No one was hurt in the ex-

plosion in the office of the Ma-

nipuri language daily

Lamyanba in Imphal, capital of

the remote and hilly Manipur

state, Press Trust of India said.

Lamyanba, formerly a monthly

journal, is to be launched as a

newspaper next month.

The two men forced out 11

trainee journalists and 40 other

staff at gunpoint before plant-

ing the bomb. The explosion

caused extensive damage to the

building and two cars parked

outside, the news agency said.

No one immediately claimed

responsibility for the attack.

The explosion came a week

after the killing of Thaunaojam

Brajmani, editor of another

local newspaper.

A dozen groups are fighting

security forces in Manipur for

causes ranging from more au-

tonomy to secession. More than

10,000 people have been killed

in the state's two-decade-long

insurgency.

## Taliban publicly hang killer of 3 women

KABUL, Aug 27 : Taliban au-

thorities publicly hanged a