INTERNATIONAL

Rescuing Ike stalwarts a race against the clock

AP, Galveston

Rescue crews canvassed neighbourhoods inundated by Ike's storm surge early yesterday, racing against time to rescue those who faced a second harrowing night trapped amid flattened houses, strewn debris and downed power lines.

One team of paramedics, rescue gash. dogs and structural engineers fanned out under a full moon on a finger of land in Galveston Bay. Authorities hoped to spare thousands of Texans 140,000 by some estimates who ignored mandates to flee Hurricane Ike from another night among the destruction. Some had been rescued, but unknown thousands remained stranded. Only four deaths had been blamed on Ike so far two in Texas and two in Louisiana and rescuers hoped to keep that tally from rising.

But roads blocked by waist-deep water and downed trees kept many rescuers at bay as they struggled through the largest search-andrescue effort in state history, just a day after the Category 2 storm crashed into Texas with 110 mph winds.

Five-year-old Jack King escaped serious injury when storm surge sent a rush of water that washed out the first floor of his family's Galveston home just two blocks from the bay. "I falled in the attic," Jack told

paramedic Stanley Hempstead of his broken loose and smashed into 10-foot tumble onto the garage floor. Jack and his family had taken refuge in the room, loaded with blankets and other supplies. As rescuers arrived, Jack gazed at a TV aglow with "The Simpsons." The only evidence of his fall was a Band-Aid plastered to his closely-cropped hair, covering a

"We just didn't think it was going from frontyard to back. to come up like this," said the boy's father, Lee King. "I'm from New Orleans, I know better. I just didn't thinkit was going to happen."

Fortunately, Jack only suffered scrapes and bruises in the fall. The Kings had hoped that a family member would pick them up, but a paramedic told him the road inland wouldn't be open for days. Lee King thought they could survive another night, but then their generator died. He ultimately decided the family was ready to leave.

Hempstead and other team members sailed through flooded streets Saturday, evoking thoughts of another disastrous storm that kept him working for 31 days.

"This brings back memories of Katrina a lot of torn up homes and flooded stuff," he said of the infamous hurricane that struck New Orleans just more than three years ago. On one side of the Galveston peninsula, a couple of barges had

Everything from red vinyl barstools to clay roof tiles littered the landscape. Some homes were "pancaked," the second floor sitting where the first had been before Ike's surge washed it out. Only the stud frames remained below the roofs of many houses, opening a clear view

Gov. Rick Perry's office said 940 people had been saved by nightfall Saturday, but that thousands had made distress calls the night before. Another 600 were rescued from Louisiana floods.

"What's really frustrating is that we can't get to them," Galveston police officer Tommie Mafrei said. "It's jeopardizing our safety when we try to tell them eight hours before to leave. They are naive about it, thinking it's not going to be that bad."

Some coastal residents waded through chest-deep water with their belongings and children in their arms to get to safety Saturday. Military helicopters loaded others carrying plastic bags and pets in their arms and brought them to dry ground.

Big-wheeled dump trucks, boats and helicopters were at the ready to continue searching hardhit Galveston and Orange County at daybreak Sunday.

Thailand's PPP backs Somchai as PM candidate THE NATION/ ANN, Bangkok

Key figures in Thailand's ruling People Power Party (PPP) agreed Saturday to support deputy leader Somchai Wongsawat as its candidate for prime minister, a high-ranking party source said.

The decision was reached at vesterday's meeting of senior party figures. They agreed Somchai was the best choice. He is viewed as "most trustworthy"

The party seniors agreed the "three Ss"--Somchai, Sompong Amornwiwat and Surapong Suebwonglee--would inevitably face opposition from government opponents, particularly the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). So, it is sensible to opt for "the best bet", according to the source.

A new prime minister from the PPP will mainly ensure passage of the 2009 Budget Bill, before dissolving the House of Representatives.

People Power executive members were scheduled to meet yesterday to discuss the party's candidates for the post. A meeting later in the day would come up with the nominee, Sompong said Saturday.

Somchai, a brother-in-law of ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra, has emerged as a key candidate after PPP leader Samak Sundaravej dropped his bid to become PM again. Samak was disqualified by court order last week.

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David Jet kayaks around destroyed boats Saturday in Nassau Bay, Texas. Ike made landfall near Galveston, Texas on Saturday as a category 2 hurricane, causing massive flooding and wind damage.

of Mugabe's opponents.

ZANU-PF, the Movement for

Democratic Change led by Morgan

Tsvangirai and the smaller opposi-

tion grouping of Arthur

Mutambara met in Harare on

Saturday to work on Cabinet

Zimbabwe opposition to get majority in Cabinet

AP, Harare

Zimbabwe's opposition will get more Cabinet posts than President Robert Mugabe's party in the longsought unity government, state radio reported Sunday.

It said the Cabinet under a power-sharing deal brokered by South African President Thabo Mbeki will have 31 members: 16 from the opposition and 15 from Mugabe's party.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF and the opposition have begun discussing the appointments before the ceremonial signing on Monday of a deal reached after weeks of negotiations that followed widely discredited elections, the radio said.

Under a media blackout on the talks, no details were immediately available on Cabinet appoint- urgently start work. ments, but the opposition has demanded control of the police Mugabe as president with greatly while agreeing to Mugabe retaining reduced powers along with two control of the military.

Both the police and military have been blamed for stateorchestrated violence and torture opposition deputies, Coltart said.

20 police killed in Turkmenistan

AFP, Moscow

Assailants killed 20 police in a clash in Turkmenistan's capital, the country's opposition in exile and other sources said Saturday.

Police battled "a religious group. possibly radical Islamists," according to a diplomatic source quoted by a website set up by opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov, founder of Turkmenistan's Popular Democratic Movement.

appointments before a meeting of "Witnesses said that 20 police Mugabe's politburo, his party's top were killed and their bodies were policy body, the radio said. taken in secret to an Ashkhabad The 30-member politburo hospital," said the www.gund "endorsed" the power-sharing ogar.org website which is not accesagreement that was announced sible in Turkmenistan.

Thursday, the radio said. The report could not be officially Attorney David Coltart, an confirmed. But residents of the opposition lawmaker, said in a Turkmenistan capita contacted by message to his supporters the first AFP confirmed that they heard heavy task lying ahead was for the Harare gunfire through the night, adding parliament to pass a constituthat Ashkhabad's northern suburbs tional amendment forming a new were surrounded by police. power-sharing government

In Moscow, Arkady Dubnov, a enabling the administration to reporter for the Vremya Novostei daily and expert on Central Asia, told The new government will keep AFP his Ashkhabad sources had informed him of "tanks and armored vehicles opening fire on a drinking largely ceremonial vice presidents water factory" in northern drawn from ZANU-PF. Tsvangirai Ashkhabad where an armed group becomes prime minister with two was hiding.

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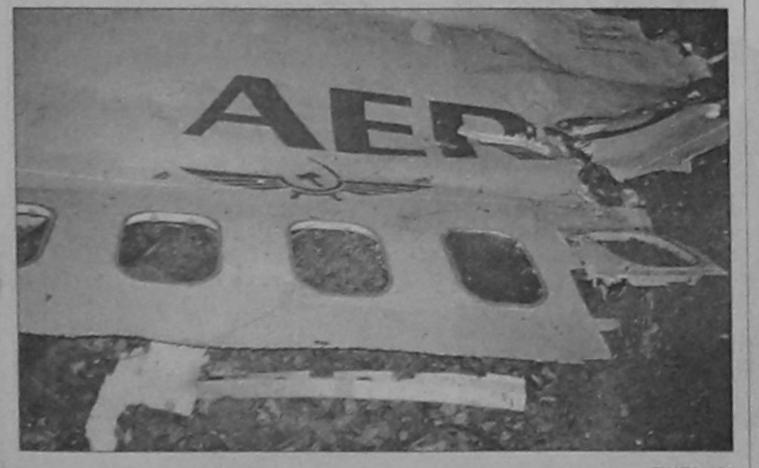
স্থিয়াম ওয়াসা কর্ণার । ৬১১০৩৪। আগ্রাবাদঃ ৭১২৮১০। রাইফেল ক্লার মার্কেট, চট্ট্র্যাম । ০৪৪৩৪৪৮৬৯৭৫ । কল্পবাজার । ৫১১৩০ । ফেনী : ৬১১৪৭। চকবাজারঃ ০১৭১২–৬৬১৯৭৮। মাইজদীঃ ০১৮১৮৬২৬০৭১, কদবাটিলাঃ ৭৪১৩২৮।

চৌমুহনী। ৫২০০৭। যাগড়াছড়ি। ৬২৪২৯। বালকবান। ৬২১৬৪। কুমিল্লা। ৬৬৫৬৭। নাকসাম। ৫১১৮৪। সিলেট। ৭১০১৭১, ৭১১৩৭৭। মৌলভীবাজার। ৫৩৭০৭। বহিশালা ৬৪০৬২। ফবিশপুর। ৬৬১১১। হবিশান্ত। ৬২২৮৯। বুলনা।

৭২২৬০৫, ৭০৯৬৯৮ । দৌলতপুর ঃ ৭৬০৬৬০। মশোর । ৬৭০০১। মশোর (২) ঃ ৬২৪৮৫। কৃতিয়া ঃ ৭০০৯৮। নড়াইল ঃ ০১৭১১৬৮৮৪৫৭। সাত্রমীরা ঃ ৬২৪২৪ । মাশুরা । ৬২৫৯৭ । রাজশাহী ঃ ৭৭৪৬৭৫, ৭৭৫৮৬৪ । চাঁপাই-নতাবশারা ঃ ০১৭১২০১৫২৬৭। নাটোর । ৬২১৮৯। নাগা । ০১৭১১২০৮১৮৯ । বছড়া নবাববাড়ী । ৫১৪৪৪, ৬৪৯০৪ । বছড়া সন্ত্রণদি মার্কেট । ০১৭১২২৭১৩০৪। লালমানিবছাট । ৬১৪৮০। শাইবাদ্ধা । ৬১৬৩৬, ০১৭১২০০৩১১৭। অয়পুরহাট ।

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Pieces of the crashed Aeroflot-Nord Boeing 737 lay on the ground at the place of its accident in Perm yesterday. The jet crashed near a Ural mountains city killing all 88 passengers and crew on board, after reportedly catching fire in the sky.

'Iraq close to security agreement with US'

AFP, Geneva

foreign minister said Saturday.

nearing an accord which could Geneva. pave the way for large-scale US

ment, Hoshyar Zebari told journalists on the sidelines of an interna-The United States and Iraq are tional security conference in

"It is up to the political leadertroop withdrawals by 2011, Iraq's ship now to make a political decision," he said, adding that the talks We have a single text, a final had been hard, but friendly and draft" of a US-Iraqi security agree- cooperative.

