

Tennessee flood claims 29 lives

More victims feared
AP, Nashville

Rescuers feared even more bodies would emerge as muddy floodwaters ebb from torrential weekend rains that swamped Nashville, much of Tennessee and two neighbouring states, leaving at least 29 dead.

The Cumberland River that has submerged parts of Nashville's historic downtown was expected to start receding yesterday after being swollen by flash floods in creeks that feed into it.

Residents and authorities know they'll find widespread property damage in inundated areas, but dread even more devastating discoveries.

"Those in houses that have been flooded and some of those more remote areas, do we suspect we will find more people? Probably so," Nashville Fire Chief Kim Lawson said. "We certainly hope that it's not a large number."

Businesses along Nashville's riverfront lost electricity early yesterday. Laurie Parker, a spokeswoman for Nashville Electric Service, said a main circuit failed before dawn, knocking out power to many downtown businesses, including the 33-story AT&T Building and a Hilton hotel.

The flooding also prompted election officials to delay the city's local primary, which had been set for yesterday.

Restaurant and bars clustered on a downtown street remained closed because of the power outage. Bar manager Susan Zoesch said the closure would be hardest on servers who rely on tips.

"We're trying to figure out what we can do for them if we're going to be shut down for a while," Zoesch said.



People with HIV/AIDS attend a rally in New Delhi yesterday, against the termination of service of 1,000 outreach workers. The demo was called to highlight the right to access for the infected to medicines and to government jobs. PHOTO: AFP

THAI PEACE HOPE

Red shirts accept reconciliation plan

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's anti-government protesters agreed yesterday to try to settle their differences with the government to prevent more bloodshed, raising hopes of an end to a tense crisis that has claimed 27 lives.

But the "Red Shirts" said they would not end their mass rally in the heart of the capital yet, calling on Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to make clear when he will dissolve parliament for elections and to withdraw troops.

"Red Shirt leaders unanimously agree to join, and welcome, the reconciliation roadmap proposed by the prime minister to prevent further loss of life," protest leader Veera Musikapong announced from the rally stage.

Abhisit said in a nationally televised address late Monday that he was ready to hold elections in mid-November if all parties accepted his reconciliation plan.

But the protesters said the premier should

spell out when he will dissolve parliament and leave it to the Election Commission to set the poll date.

"We will continue the rally until Abhisit says clearly when he will dissolve the House. Then we will discuss our next move," another protest leader, Jatuporn Prompan, told reporters.

"Reconciliation must be achieved not by intimidation and the use of force but with complete freedom," he said.

Thai shares surged 4.37 percent as investors cheered signs of a breakthrough in the long-running impasse.

The protests by thousands of mostly poor or working-class Reds -- now in their eighth week -- have paralysed Bangkok's commercial heart.

A series of deadly clashes between the demonstrators and security forces have left 27 people dead and nearly 1,000 wounded in the country's worst civil unrest in almost two decades.

US nuke arsenal a global threat

Says Iran

AFP, Tehran

The possession of more than 5,000 nuclear warheads by the United States is unjustified and threatens global security, Iran said yesterday.

"Is possessing 5,000 atomic weapons justified? How can you justify possessing such a number of weapons which threaten world security?", Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said at a news conference.

"An independent probe is needed to verify the number of US nuclear warheads," he said.

The United States revealed for the first time Monday that it has a total of 5,113 nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of September 30, 2009.

Mehmanparast also dismissed US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's criticism of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's anti-US charges at the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review meeting in New York.

"Clinton brought up several issues in order to evade the main topic of Mr Ahmadinejad's speech," he said, adding that her remarks "do not conform to logic."

Clinton and Ahmadinejad sparred at the conference, with the Iranian leader saying possessing nuclear weapons was "disgusting and shameful" and Clinton blasting Iran for allegedly flouting NPT rules.

Ten Chinese workers die in Myanmar landslide

AFP, Beijing

Ten workers from China have died in a landslide on the Myanmar side of the countries' border and a further five are still missing, state media reported yesterday.

Another six Chinese workers were injured in the landslide that also buried a digger and ten vehicles on Myanmar territory bordering the southwestern province of Yunnan, according to a report on the Yunnan News website.

Chinese rescue workers have crossed the border to the site of the accident to search for the missing but rain is hampering relief efforts, the report said.

The Chinese nationals were working in a mining area, it added.

Brown 'will take responsibility' if Labour fails in poll tomorrow

BBC News

Gordon Brown has said he will take "full responsibility" if Labour fails to win the general election.

Joined by his wife Sarah on GMTV, he said he would take responsibility for "whatever happens" on Thursday.

The prime minister said that if he "couldn't make a difference anymore" he would go off and do something else.

Despite some Labour ministers now calling for tactical voting, Mr Brown said he wanted people to vote Labour, saying the party could still win.

Mr Brown was asked whether, if people turn their back on Labour, it would be because of the party in general or him personally.

"Well I'll have to take responsibility, and I will take full responsibility if anything happens," replied the prime minister.

"But I still think there are thousands of people who've still to make up their minds."

Mr Brown was then questioned about whether he would stand down if it meant



Labour could stay in power in the event of a hung parliament.

He replied: "Well I don't think it'll work that way, but if I couldn't make a difference anymore I would go off and do something else."

Mr Brown said he might do charity or voluntary work, and that he didn't "want to do business or anything else -- I just want to do something good".

The prime minister said Labour was the "serious party", in contrast to the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

"The Conservatives are too big a risk, the Liberals can't explain what they are doing - their policies don't add up," he said.

Mr Brown also returned to his warning that millions of people would miss out on child tax credits under Tory and Lib Dem plans.

"I felt so passionately about what is happening to child tax credits," he said. "Six million people benefit from them... it is wrong to take them away."

The Conservatives are proposing that parents earning more than £50,000 between them will not get the credits, while the Lib Dems have also proposed restricting them.

The Tories say their plans to cancel most of Labour's proposed 1% rise in National Insurance would leave the majority of families better off, while the Lib Dems propose abolishing income tax for the first £10,000 of earnings, which they say will help people on low and middle incomes.

Afghan, Nato operation kills 5 militants

AP, Kabul

A joint operation between Afghan and NATO forces killed five militants in central Afghanistan, the defense ministry said Tuesday.

Several militants also were arrested in Monday's operation in Gezeb district of Daykundi province. All were involved in "disrupting security" in the area and planting roadside bombs, the ministry said.

In neighboring Ghazni province, a roadside bomb wounded four Afghan soldiers Monday.

On Tuesday, NATO said two of its service members died in the service members died in southern Afghanistan on Monday, bringing the number of international soldiers killed so far this month to six.

One service member died in a roadside bomb, the other in a vehicle accident.

Their identities were not immediately released.

Time Square car bomb suspect to face court

AP, New York

A Pakistan-born US citizen accused of driving a bomb-laden SUV into Times Square and parking it on a street lined with restaurants and Broadway theatres was to appear in court yesterday to face charges that he tried to set off a massive fireball and kill Americans, federal authorities said.

The suspect, Faisal Shahzad, was taken into custody late Monday by FBI agents and New York Police Department detectives at Kennedy Airport while trying to board a flight to Dubai, according to US Attorney General Eric Holder and other officials. He was identified by customs agents and stopped before boarding, Holder said early yesterday in Washington.

Shahzad is a naturalised US citizen and had recently returned from a five-month trip to Pakistan, where he had a wife, according to law enforcement officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the investigation into the failed car bombing.

The US attorney's office in Manhattan was handling the case and said Shahzad would

appear in court yesterday, but the charges were not made public. FBI agents searched the home at a known address for Shahzad in Bridgeport, Conn, early yesterday, said agent Kimberly Mertz, who wouldn't answer questions about the search.

Authorities removed filled plastic bags from the house overnight in a mixed-race, working-class neighbourhood of multi-family homes in Connecticut's largest city. A bomb squad came and went without entering as local police and FBI agents gathered in the cordoned-off street.

Shahzad was being held in New York overnight and couldn't be contacted. A phone number at a listed address for Shahzad in Shelton, Conn., wasn't in service.

Law enforcement officials say Shahzad bought the SUV, a 1993 Nissan Pathfinder, from a Connecticut man about three weeks ago and paid cash. The officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the case.

The vehicle identification number had been removed from the Pathfinder's dashboard, but it was stamped on the engine, and investigators used it to find the owner of record, who told them he had sold the vehicle to a stranger.

BP vows to clean up US oil slick

BBC News

Oil giant BP has acknowledged it is "absolutely responsible" for cleaning up a huge oil spill after an explosion at one of its wells off the US coast.

But BP boss Tony Hayward said the firm was not to blame for the accident, which sank the Deepwater Horizon rig on 22 April, causing the slick.

He said the equipment that failed belonged to drilling firm Transocean.

Both companies are expecting lawsuits over the slick, which threatens to cause major ecological damage.

US President Barack Obama has described the oil leak as a "potentially unprecedented" environmental disaster.

"BP is responsible for this leak. BP will be paying the bill," he said.

Slick 'heading to Florida' The US government has been putting pressure on BP to act quickly.

In a BBC interview, Mr Hayward dismissed talk of a rift between BP and US officials.

"Despite some of the rhetoric we have established an incredible co-operative relationship with the federal authorities," he said.

Acropolis stormed as Greek austerity anger grows

AFP, Athens

Demonstrators stormed the Athens Acropolis yesterday and thousands of civil servants launched a walkout ahead of a general strike against unprecedented austerity spending cuts.

With the government demanding painful "sacrifices" after the country secured a 110 billion euro (145 billion dollar) debt bailout, Labour Minister Andreas Loverdos said: "We have only one aim, to save Greece, and we are not going to budge."

About 200 Communist protesters broke into the ancient Acropolis citadel overlooking the capital at dawn, dragging a giant banner reading "Peoples of Europe Rise Up" and chanting slogans against the draconian spending cuts.

"We want to send a message to the farthest reaches of Greece and Europe," Communist lawmaker Nikos Papaconstantinou told Flash Radio.

"Similar measures that eliminate social security are taken across Europe. But popular anger will rattle imperialist organisations," he said.

Protesters did not prevent visitors from getting into the monument, one of Europe's most visited tourist attractions, the lawmaker added.

The PAME communist union mobilised less than a thousand demonstrators who massed in front of the parliament bearing banners reading "We will not give a penny for the crisis."

In the first major test of the government's resolve to push through the austerity cuts, unions have called a nationwide general strike with street demonstrations for Wednesday.

Hundreds of thousands of civil servants began a two-day strike as the government rushed through parliament a new wave of tax hikes and wage cuts to clinch the bailout loan from the European Union and International Monetary Fund.



Greek Communist Party members wave flags from the Acropolis archaeological site behind a banner hung in front of the Parthenon temple early yesterday in Athens. PHOTO: AFP