

Floods bring chaos to India and Pakistan

BBC ONLINE

More than a million people have been displaced and at least 16 killed as floods in India's Orissa state submerged entire villages, officials said yesterday.

Heavy monsoon rains submerged about 2,600 villages across 19 districts. Meanwhile more rain has been forecast in Pakistan's southern Sindh province where, officials say, 199 people have died over the last two weeks.

Millions have been affected by floods there and the UN has begun relief work.

The United Nations Children's Fund, Unicef, said up to 2.5 million children had also been affected by the rains.

One official said children and families, many of them still recovering from last year's devastating floods, are in urgent need of help before the situation worsens.

Almost one million houses have been destroyed or damaged and floods have affected nearly 4.2m acres of land, the UN says.

"The situation in Sindh is already

serious and there will be more flooding and more problems because of these rains," Arif Mehmood, a meteorology official, is quoted as saying by the Reuters news agency.

Helicopter food drops

Officials in Orissa said at least 61,000 people had been evacuated to safety and relief and rescue operations had begun.

Several rivers, including the Mahanadi, are overflowing and flood waters have severed a number of key road links.

Roads at several places in Puri, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Sambalpur, Boudh and Sonepur districts had been affected.

"A navy ship from Vishakhapatnam with a helicopter and relief material is set to join the operation," Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Special Relief Commissioner PK Mohapatra as saying.

He said a second helicopter was on standby to drop food and other essentials. Nearly 1,400 boats were also being

used for relief and rescue.

Some areas had been cut off due to breaches in river banks and embankments and helicopters were the only way to reach food and water to people stranded there, Mr Mohapatra said.

Orissa's Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took an aerial survey of the flooded areas.

"We are taking all measures to mitigate the sufferings of the people affected by flood," Mr Patnaik was quoted by television channel CNN-IBN as saying.

"After damage assessment we will also seek help from the central government," he said.

Many of those affected said they were still awaiting relief.

"There is no electricity, no cooking in our house for the last two days. No one has come to our rescue," the channel quoted Lata, a 62-year-old woman in Puri district, as saying.

The channel said she was staying with her grandchildren, refusing to vacate her home despite rising waters.



PHOTO: AFP

An Indian villager carries his bicycle as he wades through a flooded area near Delanga village in Orissa's Puri district, some 35 kilometres from Bhubaneswar yesterday.



Gillard to pursue asylum deal

AFP, Sydney

Australia yesterday revived plans to ship hundreds of asylum-seekers to Malaysia, saying it would alter legislation after the nation's highest court blocked the proposed refugee swap.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who is facing plunging support and speculation of a leadership challenge, said she would seek to amend Australia's migration law to enable the government to push through the troubled policy.

Rights activists have criticised the so-called Malaysia Solution, accusing Australia of offloading its obligations to refugees and sending vulnerable people to a country that is not a signatory to the UN convention for refugees.

The politically divisive issue, as well as a backflip on the introduction of a pollution tax, have helped drive Gillard's disapproval rating to 62 percent, according to a Nielson poll published yesterday.

The High Court last month froze the deal before it could be implemented, saying the government could not send asylum-seekers to countries not legally bound to adequately protect them.

"We are determined to pursue the arrangement we have made with Malaysia," Gillard told a press conference.

Under the plan, up to 800 boatpeople would be sent to Malaysia while Canberra would accept 4,000 of Kuala Lumpur's registered refugees for resettlement in Australia over four years.

Australia is pushing for a regional solution to stop people-smugglers bringing asylum-seekers into its waters.

PALESTINIAN UN BID CAMPAIGN Turkish PM, Abbas in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday kicks off an 'Arab Spring' tour in Egypt, where a diplomatic flurry is underway ahead of a Palestinian push to win UN statehood and as Israel's regional ties hit a new low.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas is also visiting Cairo to attend an Arab League meeting later yesterday and for talks with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton who stopped in Egypt on her way to Israel.

Erdogan will also visit Tunisia and Libya, where popular uprisings such as that in Egypt have toppled long-standing autocratic regimes, as he bids to forge stronger ties with Arab nations as Ankara's relations with Israel sour.

Turkey has expelled the Israeli ambassador over the storming by Israeli naval commandos last year of a convoy of ships trying to reach Gaza in defiance of the blockade, killing nine Turks.

Egypt's relations with Israel also worsened, with protesters ransacking the Jewish state's embassy in Cairo on the weekend forcing the ambassador to flee after the killing of six Egyptian policemen on their

common border last month as Israel hunted militants after a deadly attack.

The Palestinians' determination to push for UN membership has triggered wide concerns in Israel, where Defence Minister Ehud Barak on Sunday called for the 15-member inner security cabinet to convene for a debate on Israel's complex regional relations.

A strong supporter of the Palestinian cause, Erdogan arrives late yesterday in Cairo and the next day he will address a ministerial meeting of the Arab League and hold talks with top Egyptian officials aimed at boosting ties.

State television said Abbas and Ashton arrived separately in Cairo and quoted top Palestinian official Nabil Shaath saying that the diplomatic flurry was a "positive" sign for the UN membership bid.

Yesterday evening Abbas will attend a special Arab League committee meeting devoted to the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, just days before heading to New York to seek UN membership for Palestine.

Abbas is expected to submit a formal request on September 20 for the United Nations to accept Palestine as its 194th member.



PHOTO: AFP

A police van sits destroyed near a store front after it was attacked by angry 'Dalit' (untouchable) protesters in Paramakudi, Tamil Nadu.

Ulfa denies reports on Paresh Barua

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A faction of United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) has denied media reports that its commander-in-chief Paresh Barua and several other party men were shot during a raid by troops in Myanmar.

"Our leaders and cadres are safe and secure. News about our leaders being injured is not only false but also a campaign to mislead the people of Assam," Arunodoy Dohotiya, publicity in-charge of Ulfa, said in an email to the media houses.

On Saturday, media reported that Paresh Barua, a fugitive Ulfa leader who is wanted by a Bangladesh court for his alleged involvement in the smuggling of 10 truckloads of arms in 2004, had been shot at in the jungles of north-west Myanmar.

Police open fire on 'Dalits' in India

7 killed

BBC ONLINE

Seven people were killed on Sunday after police in India's Tamil Nadu state opened fire on a crowd of angry Dalit (formerly untouchables) protesters.

The incident occurred at Paramakudi town, some 530km (330 miles) from the capital, Chennai, on Sunday.

Protesters had blocked roads and set a number of government vehicles on fire. Tamil Nadu's chief minister said the police acted in self defence.

The protesters were demanding the release of their leader, John Pandian.

Party workers had gathered in the town to observe the death anniversary of a Dalit leader, Immanuel Sekaran.

The police opened fire on the crowd, killing five people on the spot. Two others died of their injuries in hospital late on Sunday.

Celebrating bounties

FROM PAGE 20

Milon Bhattacharjee -- conjured up a storm of beats. The refined pakhawaj and the raw, intoxicating madol were linked by the steady tabla -- a brilliant start of an event recognising and honouring the talents in Bangladeshi culture.

The award giving ceremony of the fourth "Celebrating Life", an annual talent hunt recognising emerging photographers, filmmakers and lyricists, organised by The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank, was held last night.

The theme of this year's contest was "Celebrating the Gifts of Nature". Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad was the chief guest at the programme.

The event was dedicated to the recently deceased filmmaker Tareque Masud and journalist-cinematographer Mishuk Munier. Rafi Hossain, editor of Star Insight and coordinator of "Celebrating Life" recalled Masud's involvement in the contest. A minute of silence was observed for the duo.

Following the welcome speech by Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The

Daily Star, and vote of thanks by Jim McCabe, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, the winners received their awards from the chief guest.

This year's contest received over 10,000 entries (4,000 photos and 6,000 songs). Ripa Sarker won the first prize in lyrics category and M Yusuf Tushar in photography category. No award was given in filmmaking this year.

Filmmaker Soovas Dutt, photographer Shahidul Alam and music director Khandaker Nurul Alam was given Lifetime Achievement Awards for their great contributions in respective fields.

The highlight of the event was a live performance by virtuoso Indian classical vocalist Ustad Rashid Khan. The Ustad, on surmandal, started off with an alaap on Raga Malkauns.

A brilliant start and a dazzling end -- the Celebrating Life finale gave the classical music lovers a memorable experience. In-depth coverage of the event will be in tomorrow's Star Arts & Entertainment.

8 more

FROM PAGE 20

the plaintiff, said the findings of the probe indicate that it was not an incident of robbery but a thought-out plot to wipe out a minority family.

Of the accused, Aminur Rahman is the president of Kalipur union BNP and chairman of Kalipur union. He is cousin of BNP lawmaker Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, also former state minister for environment and forest.

The court yesterday fixed October 17 for taking deposition of witnesses, said Public Prosecutor Abul Hashem.

On January 9 this year, Hla Ching Pru of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), investigation officer in the case, submitted a supplementary charge sheet against 39 people including eight new accused.

The court later dropped charges against accused Nurul Islam, said PP Hashem.

There was an allegation that Aminur had been involved in the incident. But the then investigation officer ASP Clarence Gomez did not include Aminur in the charge sheet he submitted against 31 people on December 14, 2005.

The plaintiff later filed a petition challenging the charge sheet and appealed for further investigation.

A Chittagong court on March 20, 2007 ordered further probe into the case and the then ASP Shafiqur Rahman was appointed the new IO. He submitted charge sheet against the same 31 accused on November 27, 2007.

When the plaintiff again filed a petition challenging the charge sheet, the case was transferred to the CID and ASP Khurshid Jamil of the CID was made the new IO. Four more CID officials conducted probe into the case and submitted charge sheets thrice without mentioning the name of Aminur.

Hla Pru, who had been appointed the eighth IO, submitted a charge sheet against 39 people including Aminur on January 9. Aminur surrendered to the court on February 2 and obtained bail in the case.

The defence lawyers yesterday requested the court to drop the names of Aminur and another accused Sabur Ahmad from the charge sheet. But the court turned it down.

The other accused include Abdul Karim, Javed Hossain, Ahammad Mia, Mahbubur Rahman, Md Hasan, Sarwar Uddin, Md Shahjahan, Abu Taiyab, Akbar Ali, Shahjahan, Aminul Hoque, Ahammad Hossain, Matlub, Shafiul Azam, Jashim, Nazrul Islam, Aminul Hoque, Abu Mia, Selim, Bakkar, Rubel, Abu, Oji Ahmad, Aziz, Fazal Kader, Asgar, Jashim, Enam, Ledu, Kamrul Islam, Amir Hossain, Md Yunus, Abul Kalam, Nurunnabi, Rashid Ahmad and Abdul Nabi.

Request for Quotation (RFQ)

Procurement of Machine Readable Passports (MRP) /Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Readers



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh hereby invites sealed quotations from interested bidders for procurement of 40 units Machine Readable Passports (MRP) /Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Readers.

Submission of Quotation: The envelopes should state "Procurement of Machine Readable Passports (MRP) /Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Readers" and marked as 'Confidential'. The selection of Bids will be done based on the UNDP procurement rules and regulations.

All interested firms may collect the bidding Documents (RFQ) from the below e-mail address: parvin.akther@undp.org . Bid must be dropped to the Procurement Cluster of UNDP, IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka before 12.30 hrs on 28 September 2011.