

Floods in Tripura displace tens of thousands

Death toll rises to 23; Gomti river still above danger mark

REUTERS, Guwahati

Soldiers in lifeboats ferried people to safety in India's northeastern state of Tripura yesterday after heavy rain triggered floods and landslides, forcing more than 65,000 people from their homes and killing 23, authorities said.

Television images showed army personnel manning the rescue craft, while cars and buses were marooned in streets of knee-deep water, and disaster management officials said



four days of incessant rain had swelled rivers.

"As of this morning, most rivers are flowing below the critical mark," said one of them, Suman Deb, although the intensity of the rain had reduced since Thursday night.

"However, the river Gomti still continues to flow above the danger mark," Deb said, referring to the state's main river, which flows through the district of Comilla in neighbouring Bangladesh to empty into the Bay of Bengal.

The displaced have gathered in 450 camps, the officials said, with a total of about 1.7 million affected, along with extensive damage to infrastructure, crops and livestock.

Most deaths were caused by landslides, though some followed the collapse of mud walls and drowning, another official said on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.



Security force personnel work to rescue injured passengers after a bus carrying 43 Indian passengers traveling to Kathmandu from Pokhara plunged into a river in Tanahun District, Gandaki Province, Nepal yesterday. At least 27 people died and 16 were injured after the bus plunged into the river.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sit down for talks with Russia

Modi urges Zelensky in wartime Kyiv, offers to act as a friend to help bring peace; Russian strikes kill eight civilians across Ukraine

REUTERS, Kyiv

India's Narendra Modi yesterday urged President Volodymyr Zelensky to sit down for talks with Russia to end the war in Ukraine and offered to act as a friend to help bring peace as the two leaders met in wartime Kyiv.

The first visit by an Indian prime minister in modern Ukrainian history comes at a volatile juncture in the war launched by Russia in February 2022, with Moscow making slow gains in eastern Ukraine as Kyiv presses a cross-border incursion.

Modi, whose visit to Moscow last month was criticised by Kyiv, said he had come to Ukraine with a message of peace and called for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine at the earliest opportunity.

"The road to resolution can only be found through dialogue and diplomacy. And we



should move in that direction without wasting any time. Both sides should sit together to find a way out of this crisis," Modi said.

"I want to assure you that India is ready to play an active role in any efforts towards peace. If I can play any role in this personally, I will do that. I want to assure you as a friend," he said.

The remarks were made during joint statements, in which both leaders hailed

the visit as "historic". Modi spoke second and Zelensky did not have an opportunity to respond to the call for dialogue.

But the Ukrainian leader said in his remarks that "the matter of ending the war and a just peace are the priority for Ukraine".

Ukraine has repeatedly said it wants the war to end but on Kyiv's terms, not Russia's. Ukraine has been pushing to hold a second international summit later this year to advance its vision of peace and involve representatives from Russia.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes killed eight civilians across Ukraine, regional authorities announced yesterday.

Attacks killed two in northeastern Sumy region, the national police said. Further to the east, in the Kharkiv region bordering Russia, two civilians died in an attack, regional governor Oleg Syneghubov said.

Shadman

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316-5 at stumps on day three after Pakistan declared at 448 for six late on Day 2.

Bangladesh saw a stable opening pair in Joy and Zakir Hasan in their last five Tests in between June 2023 and March 2024 and the injury of the former surely brought some anxiety in the camp before the opening Test as Shadman, who was a reserve opener in the current 16-member squad, hadn't played a Test since April 2022.

The southpaw was dropped following his poor show against South Africa in Durban where he could make only nine and zero in both innings and was unpicked in Bangladesh's next 13 Tests.

Bangladesh found their back against the door on the third day after they resumed on 27-0 as they soon lost Zakir (12) and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (16) to get reduced to 53-2.

Despite the fall of two wickets, Shadman showcased great patience, playing a composed innings from one side with his partner Mominul Haque taking charge from the other hand.

Shadman's determination could be gauged from the fact that he struck his first boundary during the 24th over of the day.

The 29-year-old reached his third Test fifty in 123 balls with another boundary — a pull at deep backward square leg off Naseem Shah.

Shadman's fifty was also a big relief for Bangladesh as ever since the historic 312-run opening stand between Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes in Khulna in 2015 — a game in which both openers struck tons — no Bangladeshi openers were able to score a fifty against Pakistan in the following four Tests.

The only instance when Shadman looked to be troubled by Pakistani bowlers was when he was given LBW off an Agha Salman delivery just after the lunch break, but that decision had to be reversed following a review.

However, he failed to finish on a high as he was bowled by pacer Mohammad Ali in the last ball before tea.

By the time Shadman got dismissed, he already laid a solid platform for his side and also for himself as he had all but regained his lost spot in the Test eleven.

Bangladesh now trail by 132 runs and would hope at least one of the unbeaten set batters — Liton Das, who scored 52 off 58 deliveries, and Mushfiqur Rahim, who is on 55 off 122 deliveries — get to the three-figure mark that Shadman had missed out on.

UN watchdog wants action on UK 'racist acts and violence'

AFP, Geneva

A United Nations committee yesterday voiced concern about recurring racist violence in Britain following the recent anti-immigration riots, and called for measures to curb "racist hate speech" by politicians.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) demanded thorough investigations into racist hate crimes, and strong

penalties for the perpetrators.

"The committee expressed its concern about the persistence of hate crimes, hate speech and xenophobic incidents on various platforms and by politicians and public figures," it said in a statement.

"It was particularly concerned about recurring racist acts and violence against ethnic and ethno-religious minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers by

extremist far-right and white supremacist individuals and groups, including the violent acts committed in late July and early August 2024."

More than a dozen English towns and cities saw unrest and riots. Officials have accused far-right elements of stirring up the disorder, which targeted mosques and hotels housing asylum seekers as well as other properties and police officers.

Row among trustees spells trouble for NSU

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NSU VC Atiqul Islam, also an ex-officio member of the reconstituted trustee board, refused to clarify the current situation.

"I don't have any clarification regarding the prevailing situation. I don't know anything," he told this newspaper yesterday.

Prof Biswajit Chanda, University Grants Commission (UGC) member responsible for overseeing private universities, declined to make comments.

On Tuesday, the High Court bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Sashanka Shekhar issued a stay on the government's decision that reconstituted the NSU trustee board in August 2022.

The court passed the order and a rule after hearing two writ petitions filed by Aziz, Azim, Benajir, MA Kashem, Rehana and Shahjahan.

Md Imam Hossain and Kazi Akhtar Hosain, lawyers for the petitioners, told reporters that the previous trustee board was revived through the HC order.

The NSU, one of the leading

private universities in the country, was established in 1992. It has about 23,000 students.

WHY BOARD WAS RECONSTITUTED?

Then president Abdul Hamid on August 16, 2022, reconstituted the NSU Board of Trustees, dropping seven of its former members.

Hamid, also then chancellor of the university, reconstituted the board as some members of the previous board were found to be "involved in anti-state activities, sponsorship of militancy, corruption and arbitrariness" in a probe by the UGC.

He also cut the number of board members to 12 from 16.

The seven dropped previous trustee board members are Azim Uddin Ahmed, Benajir Ahmed, Aziz Al Kaiser, MA Kashem, Rehana Rahman, Mohammed Shahjahan, and Nurul H Khan.

The ex-president, however, kept nine of the previous board members in the new one — ex-officio member Atiqul Islam, MA Kalam, SM Kamaluddin, Abul Kashem, Yasmin Kamal, ASF Rahman, Junaid Kamal

Ahmad, Fawzia Naaz and Tanveer Harun.

Three new faces were added to the board — Javed Munir Ahmed, Faiza Jamil and Sheema Ahmed. Javed was later made chairman of the board.

This correspondent did not find the names of the trustees on the NSU website yesterday.

A member of the previous trustee board yesterday said the decision on reconstituting the board came following pressure from different offices and agencies of the previous Sheikh Hasina-led government. He said four members of a single family were even made trustees.

Meanwhile, a group of NSU students have been staging demonstrations for more than a week to press home their 30-point demand, including removal of the VC and several top officials, reformation of the proctorial body, ban on student politics and waiver of tuition and other fees.

Kaiser yesterday said students have put forward some demands, including removal of the VC. "We are yet to take any decision on terminating him."

Civic platform launched to protect rights

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the independence of the judiciary, protecting the rights of workers and farmers, and ensuring democratic campus free of occupation," reads the press release.

After every mass uprising, it was seen that fascism was reestablished and all the achievements made at the cost of human lives were in vain, it said.

"This mass uprising cannot be allowed to fail. So, a unified platform comprising all forces that took part in democratic movements is necessary. That is why this committee has been formed."

The joint conveners of the committee are Prof Haroon ur-Rashid, Abdullah Kafi Ratan, Prof Tanjimuddin Khan, Seema Dutt, Maha Mirza and Kallol Mustafa.

The committee members include Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Salimullah Khan, Prof Akmal Hossain, Prof Mamun Al Rashid, Prof Mohammad Azam, Moshahida Sultana Ritu, Snigdha Rezwana, journalist Abu Saeed Khan, Ashraf Qaiser, Bidhan Riberu, Anis Raihan, Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed, ASM Kamal Uddin, Afzalur Basar, Mazharul Islam Babla, lawyers

Jyotirmoy Barua and Manzoor Al Mateen, writer and artist Mostafa Zaman, artist Arup Rahi, Mofizur Rahman Laltu, Bithi Ghosh, Sushmita Roy Supti, Azimun Nuzhat Manisha, Omar Tarek Chowdhury, Jamshed Anwar Tapan, film producers Amitabh Reza Chowdhury and Kamar Ahmad Simon, Prof Kazi Rafiqul Islam, Baki Billah, Joydeep Bhattacharya, Nasimul Khair Deik, Taslima Akhtar Lima, Jolly Talukder, Amena Khatun, Sunayan Chakma, Haroon or Rashid Bhuiyan, Manas Nandi, Shamim Imam, Satyajit Biswas, Iqbal Kabir, Afzal Hossain and Rashed Shahriar.

Lanka flags civil service pay hike ahead of vote

AFP, Colombo

Bankrupt Sri Lanka will offer hefty salary increases and higher pensions to civil servants, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said yesterday just weeks before September 21 polls in which he is seeking re-election.

Wickremesinghe is seeking a mandate in September's presidential polls for his efforts to repair the island nation's ruined finances after an unprecedented 2022 economic crisis and \$46 billion foreign debt default.

Despite hiking taxes and reining in public spending, in line with an International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue plan, his administration has backed a government committee's recommendation to boost public sector pay from next January.

"Regardless of which government is in power, there is a pressing need to increase the salaries of public servants," his office said in a statement.

The committee recommended increasing salaries by 25 to 50 percent, boosting pensions and expanding healthcare benefits for government workers.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon's south kill seven people

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon's health ministry said yesterday Israeli strikes killed seven people including a child in different parts of the south, with Hezbollah saying three of its fighters were among the dead.

Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, has exchanged regular fire with Israel in support of its ally Hamas since the Israeli offensive in Gaza began on October. The health ministry said an "Israeli enemy drone strike" killed two people including a "seven-year-old" in Aita al-Shaab, and two other "Israeli" strikes killed five people in three other locations in the south.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said a "hostile drone" targeted a house in Aita al-Shaab with "two guided missiles". The health ministry said Israeli strikes included a raid "on the village of Tayr Harfa that killed three people", with Hezbollah later mourning three fighters killed by Israeli fire, including a man from that same village.



University students hold a poster reading "We are fed up with your tricks and drama" during a protest against a move to overturn a Constitutional Court ruling that changed eligibility rules for candidates in the general election later this year, in front of the People's Representative Council (DPR) in Banda Aceh, Indonesia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Hasina, Rehana, S Alam

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was rushed to the hospital with bullets in his chest and stomach. He died on August 7.

Hasina is also facing charges of ordering the killing of Dhaka Commerce College student Abdul Ahad Saikat in Savar. His father Nazrul Islam also accused 126 others in the case yesterday, Savar Model Police Station OC Atiqur Rahman said.

The other accused include AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, ex-minister Asaduzzaman, former state minister Arafat, and former state minister for disaster management Enamur Rahman.

According to the case details, they ordered the Chhatra League, Jubo League, and Awami League members to carry out the attack.

Nazrul said in the case that his son was killed when he participated in the student-led mass uprising against "systematic inequalities" on August 5, the day Hasina resigned and fled.

According to the case dossier, Saikat was brutally beaten and shot on Mukti Road. He was declared dead upon arrival at the hospital. OC Atiqur said they were investigating the incident.

Another case was filed at the same police station over the death of Malaysian expatriate Shraban Gazi, 20. Shraban's father Mannan Gazi filed the case against 85 AL leaders and activists, including Quader, Asaduzzaman, Arafat, and Enamur.

Protest victims' families filed nine other murder cases against AL leaders in different parts of the country, including five in Ashulia and three in Sirajganj.

The Ashulia victims were meat seller Lebu, 20, Maulana Sadiqur Rahman, Tanzil Ahmed Sujoy, Class VIII student Arafat Munshi, and BNP activist Mamun Khandkar. All of them were shot dead in the Baipile area on August 5. Their family members named a total of 78 people and around 1,200 unidentified individuals in the cases.

In Sirajganj, ex-MPs Jannat Ara Henry, Millat Munna, former cabinet secretary Kabir Bin Anwar, and 461 AL men were killed in three cases on charges of killing three BNP men — Md Ronju Sheikh, a joint convener of Sirajganj district Jubo Dal, Jubo Dal activist Abdul Latif and Chhatra Dal activist Sumon Sheikh.

Their family members filed the cases at Sirajganj Sadar Police Station on Thursday night, OC Md Humayun Kabir said.

In Dhamrai, former Dhaka-20 MP Benjir Ahmed and 81 others were sued over the death of Ariful Islam Sader, 18, a student of Savar Cantonment Public College, by his father Azim Uddin.

In Barishal, the accused in a case over vandalising and looting the BNP office include former state minister for water resources Zahid Farooq, and former city corporation mayors Abul Khair Abdullah and Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah.