

EDITORIAL

America's Shame in Montreal

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The best that can be said of the recently concluded meeting on climate change in Montreal is that the countries that care about global warming did not allow the United States delegation to blow the whole conference to smithereens. Washington was intent on making sure that the conferees required no more of the United States than what it is already doing to restrain greenhouse gas emissions, which amounts to virtually nothing.

At least the Americans' shameful foot-dragging did not bring the entire process to a complete halt, and for this the other industrialized countries, chiefly Britain and Canada, deserve considerable praise. It cannot be easy for America's competitors to move forward with costly steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while the United States refuses to carry its share of the load. Nevertheless, the Europeans and other signatories to the 1997 treaty limiting greenhouse gas emissions - a treaty the Bush administration has rejected - promised to work toward new and more ambitious targets and timetables when the agreement lapses in 2012.

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 12/13/2005

For its part, the Bush administration deserves only censure. No one expected a miraculous conversion. But given the steadily mounting evidence of the present and potential consequences of climate change - disappearing glaciers, melting Arctic ice caps, dying coral reefs, threatened coastlines, increasingly violent hurricanes - one would surely have expected America's negotiators to arrive in Montreal willing to discuss alternatives.

They did not. Instead, the principal negotiators, Paula Dobriansky and Harlan Watson, continued to tout the benefits of an approach that combines voluntary reductions by individual companies with further research into "breakthrough" technologies.

That will not work. While a few companies may decide to proceed on their own, the private sector as a whole will neither create new technologies nor broadly deploy them unless all countries are required to do their share under a regime that combines agreed-upon targets with strong financial incentives for reaching them. To believe that companies will spend heavily to reduce emissions while their competitors are not doing the same is to believe in the tooth fairy.

The Europeans are finding solace in the fact that the Americans - after much kicking and screaming, and after public rebukes by Canada's prime minister and a surprise visitor named Bill Clinton - finally agreed to join informal "nonbinding" discussions that will try to entice developing countries like China and India into the process. It's certainly true that without the developing nations on board, any effort to keep

greenhouse gases at manageable levels will be for naught. China, for example, is building coal-fired power plants at a rapid clip and is expected to overtake the United States as the biggest producer of greenhouse gases in 20 years. Copyright 2005 The New York Times Company | Home | Privacy

But talk is cheap, and nonbinding talk is even cheaper. And talk alone will not get the developing world into the game. Why should India and China make major sacrifices while the United States, in effect, gets a free ride? The battle against global warming will never be won unless America joins it, urgently and enthusiastically. Our grandchildren will look back with anger and astonishment if we fail to do so.

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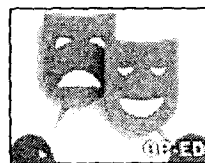
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Typhoon rains death, destruction in vast swathe of East Asia; toll 43

Three lakh people evacuated from Vietnam's coastal regions; network of dykes breached



ASSESSING DAMAGE: Chinese farmers work on a field of banana trees damaged by Typhoon Damrey in Qionghai, south China's Hainan province, on Tuesday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

HANOI: A greatly weakened Typhoon Damrey wrought more destruction in its wake on Wednesday after killing at least 43 persons in a week-long sweep through a vast swathe of East Asia.

Damrey was downgraded into a tropical depression as wind speeds dropped to just 38 kmph from a high of around 200 kmph, according to the Hong Kong Observatory.

The storm killed 16 persons in the Philippines, 16 in southern China, eight in Vietnam and three in Thailand, where it caused widespread flooding in the north. Five people have been reported missing there.

Earlier, after passing over northern Vietnam on Tuesday, the storm brought heavy rain and strong winds to Laos.

"According to initial estimates, Damrey, the most violent storm to hit Vietnam in a decade, caused damage worth tens of millions of dollars," a Central Government weather official in

Vietnam said on Wednesday.

"Tens of thousands of hectares of agricultural land as well as major infrastructures such as roads, bridges and dykes, electricity supply network and telecommunications have been damaged and some boats are missing," he said. "People still

have to remain in churches, schools and public buildings," said a flood control official in the northern province of Nam Dinh.

Food aid

"We have to wait until the waters recede, then restore the dykes before the people can re-

turn home. We are providing them with instant noodles and clean water," the official said.

Nguyen Van Hung, a 72-year-old farmer in Nam Dinh, said it was the biggest storm in memory.

"It was lucky that the authorities forced us to evacuate to

churches and schools before the storm arrived. Now, we will be hungry as we have lost all our crops," Mr. Hung said.

In the adjoining province of Ninh Binh, flood control official Vu Kim Khoi said a lot of farmers faced ruin having lost all their crops and animals.

"They'll need state help for weeks before they can resume cultivation," he said.

His counterpart Tran Xuan Giai in Nam Dinh said the immediate priority was repair of dykes.

"Our soldiers are still on this jobs. And we still need to give emergency help to people in danger," he said.

About 300,000 people were evacuated from Vietnam's coastal regions, where extensive networks of dykes were breached.

The storm weakened as it crossed into Laos, encountering the Annamite chain of mountains, said a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

"There is no major damage to

our country. No casualty, no death has been reported," he said.

In China, the Civil Affairs Ministry said the storm had caused nearly 8.5 billion yuan [\$1.05 billion] in damage in Hainan, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces as of Monday night, while 436,000 people had been evacuated.

Hainan Vice-Governor Wu Changyuan said 20,000 homes had been flattened on the island province, while 380 km of roads had been damaged and 704,000 hectares of cropland ruined.

In the Philippines, the storm displaced more than 8,000 people from nine towns and cities in the Bicol peninsula southeast of Manila.

Several hundred hectares of farmland were flooded.

Asia is prone to tropical storms and typhoons, two of which caused widespread destruction in China and killed scores of people earlier this month. — AFP

Sluggish aid frustrates Rita victims

PORT ARTHUR (TEXAS): Hurricane Rita victims along the rural Texas Gulf Coast are waiting to see whether their complaints about sluggish federal and state aid result in speedier action in the coming days.

Mayor Oscar Ortiz expressed cautious optimism after meeting with Gov. Rick Perry on Tuesday, but said he was still relying more on private companies and

individuals than the Government as the city struggles to recover.

"I'm just hoping [the Government] comes through," Mr. Ortiz said. "It seems like the larger towns in the news are the ones getting the help." Nearly four days after Rita hit, many of the storm's sweltering victims were still waiting for electricity, gasoline, water and other relief. The situation

prompted one top emergency official to complain that people were "living like cavemen."

In the hard-hit refinery towns of Port Arthur and Beaumont, crews struggled to cross debris-clogged streets to deliver generators and water to people stranded by Rita.

They predicted it could be a month before power was restored. Red tape was also blamed for the delays. — AP

NBA threatens stir against Maheshwar dam project

CBI probe demanded into the alleged "misuse" of public money by the promoters

Staff Correspondent

BHOPAL: The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) has threatened that the villagers affected by the Maheshwar dam project on the Narmada will launch a struggle to save their land. It has also demanded a CBI probe into the alleged "misuse" of public money by S. Kumars, the promoters of the project.

Addressing a press conference here, NBA leader Alok Agrawal criticised the Madhya Pradesh Government for "leniency" shown to S. Kumars in the recovery of loans.

He said the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet had decided to reschedule the payments till 2009 for loans taken by S. Kumars even though the group had "wilfully" defaulted on a Rs. 82-crore inter-corporate deposit (ICD) loan taken from the State Industrial Development Corporation (MPSIDC).

Mr. Agrawal said that in order to go ahead with the "destructive

The project, if completed, will submerge homes and irrigated agricultural land of over 50,000 farmers

and unsustainable" Maheshwar project, the State Government was paving the way for finance agencies to put more and more money into the project without ensuring recovery of outstanding loans taken by the promoters.

He demanded that the State Government take immediate steps to recover the money by attaching and auctioning the S. Kumars properties in Madhya Pradesh and Mumbai and also to scrap the dam project.

He said the NBA wanted the CBI or Central Vigilance Commission and the Reserve Bank of India to investigate the "entire financial mess" regarding the

project, including the role of the Power Finance Corporation, IF-CI and other financial institutions in not taking action on multiple wilful defaults.

Mr. Agrawal said the project, if completed, would submerge homes and irrigated agricultural land of over 50,000 farmers, fishermen and boat people in 61 villages in the fertile plains of the Narmada valley. It would also wash away scores of sand quarries, hundreds of acres of riverbed draw-down land and the richest fresh water fisheries in the valley. It is also certain to cause extensive water logging, he said.

So far, Mr. Agrawal said, the promoters had neither identified nor given the oustees irrigated agricultural land although this was required under the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award (NWDTA) and the rehabilitation policy.

He said the State Government should immediately scrap the project.

Hurricane devastation less than expected



Flooding caused by Hurricane Rita is seen in Sweet Lake area of Louisiana on Sunday.

ASSOCIATED Press
Beaumont, September 25

RATTLED BY Hurricane Rita, residents along the Texas and Louisiana coasts began clearing away debris as power crews worked to restore electricity to more than 1 million customers in four states. They also breathed a sigh of relief that the devastation caused by the once-dreaded storm was less severe than that caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Rita downed trees, sparked fires across the hurricane zone and swamped Louisiana shoreline towns with a 15-foot storm surge that required daring boat and helicopter rescues of hundreds of people.

Adam Suire, 77, said he climbed into an oak tree Friday night with his wife, daughter and son-in-law when Rita flooded his house south of Erath, Louisiana. A Coast Guard helicopter plucked the battered family from the tree on Saturday afternoon.

In Jasper County, within the Piney Woods of East Texas, trees lying over the roads were making it difficult for sheriff's deputies to check on people.

Search and rescue teams working with the FEMA arrived late on Saturday in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in a convoy of about a dozen vehicles loaded with water, ready-to-eat meals, medical supplies and fuel. The crews planned to get some rest before getting to work not long after dawn.

About 1,373,544 people were without power in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi according to utility companies. One person was killed in Mississippi when a tornado spawned by the hurricane overturned a mobile home.

Damage to the vital concentration of oil refineries along the coast appeared relatively light, although industry officials said it was too early to assess whether there would be an impact on oil prices. Valero Energy Corp. said its 255,000-barrel-per-day Port Arthur refinery sustained significant damage and would need at least two weeks for repairs.

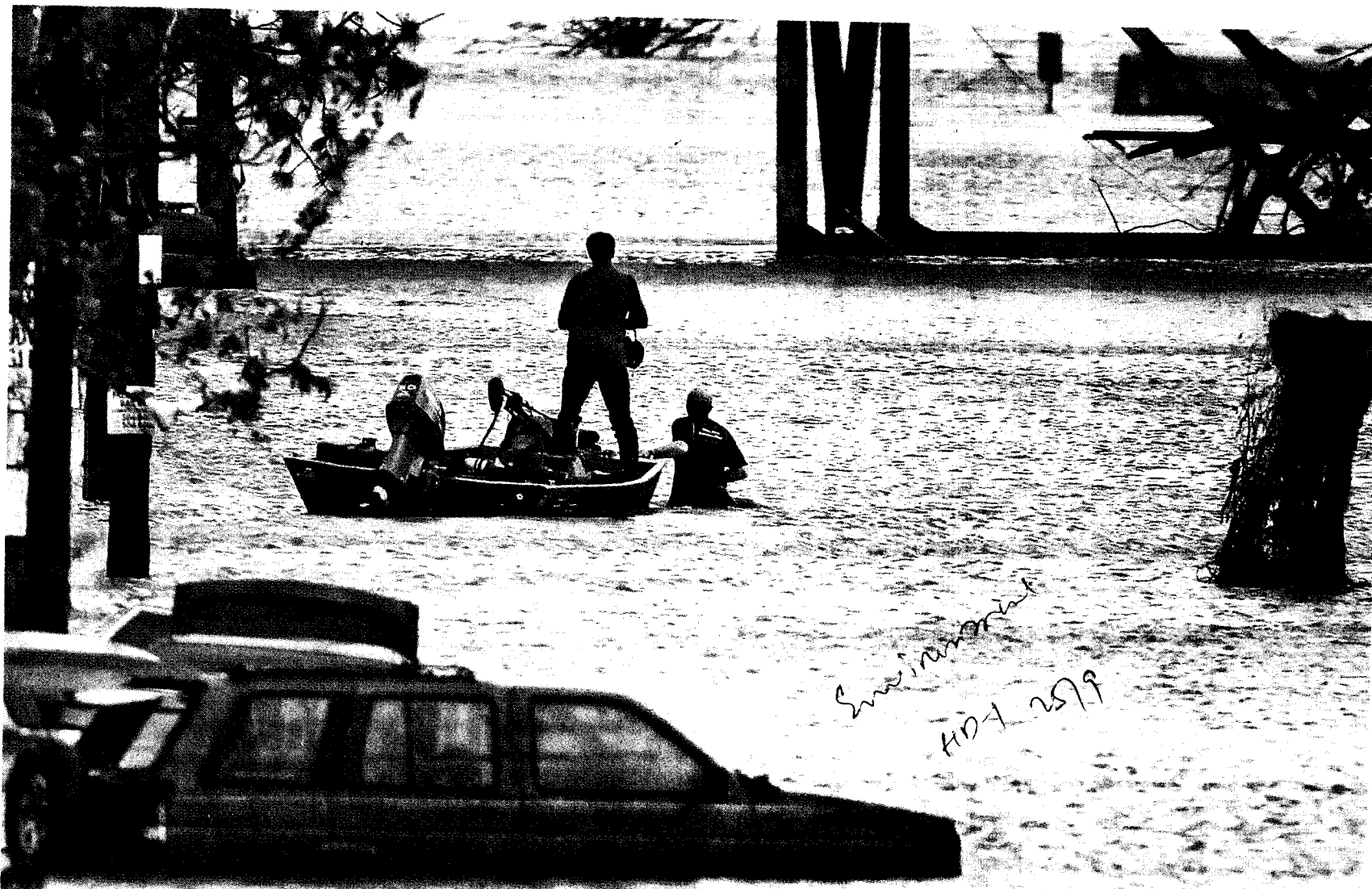
Some of the worst flooding occurred along the Louisiana coast, where floodwaters were 9 feet deep near the town of Abbeville. About 500 people were rescued from high waters south of New Orleans, some by helicopters. Elsewhere, a portion of Interstate 10 over the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles was closed after barges broke loose from their moorings and slammed into the bridge.

New Orleans, devastated by Katrina barely three weeks ago, endured a second day of new flooding that could seriously disrupt recovery plans. The Army Corps of Engineers said it would need at least two weeks to pump water from the most heavily flooded neighbourhoods after crews plug levee breaches.

Texas officials planned for an orderly return of the nearly 3 million people who had fled ahead of Rita, setting up regions that would reopen to evacuees on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

President Bush, mindful of criticism the federal government was slow to respond to Hurricane Katrina three weeks ago, visited the Texas emergency operations centre in Austin on Saturday.

REUTERS



IN DEEP WATERS: A camera crew makes its way by boat through a New Orleans street on Friday as the already devastated city suffered renewed flooding hours before Hurricane Rita struck the U.S. coast. — PHOTO: REUTERS (ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH, REPORT ON PAGE 12)

Hurricane Rita pounds Texas, Louisiana

It smashes windows, sparks fires and knocks power out to 1 million people

BEAUMONT (TEXAS): Hurricane Rita slammed into Texas and Louisiana early Saturday, smashing windows, sparking fires and knocking power out to more than one million customers, but largely sparing vulnerable Houston and already reeling New Orleans.

Rita made landfall at 0730 GMT as a Category 3 storm just east of the Sabine Pass, on the

Texas-Louisiana line, bringing top winds of 193 kmph and warnings of up to 64 cm of rain, the National Hurricane Centre said. By late morning, it had weakened to barely above hurricane status, with its sustained winds at 75 mph (121 kmph) as it moved north near Jasper.

Fears of severe flooding persisted; parts of the east Texas counties of Jasper and Tyler re-

ceived 25-30 cm of rain, the National Weather Service said.

There were no immediate reports of fatalities or any detailed word on damage to vast oil refinery industry in the area. Rescuers and search teams in many areas had to wait for winds to subside. About three million people fled an 800-km stretch of the Texas-Louisiana coast ahead of the storm, keeping in mind the devastating toll Hurricane Katrina inflicted on New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast barely three weeks ago.

The storm spun off tornadoes as it churned northwest, causing transformers to explode. In the Jasper county, a house with seven persons inside floated in floodwaters after it came off its foundation, the sheriff's communications supervisor, Alice Duckworth, said.

But the flood-prone cities of Houston and Galveston — largely evacuated over the past four days — escaped a direct hit. "So far, Houston is weathering the storm," Mayor Bill White said.

In New Orleans, rain

drenched parts of the abandoned city early Saturday, straining the levee system damaged by Katrina and causing more flooding in already ruined and abandoned poor neighbourhoods.

In Lake Charles, home to the nation's 12th-largest seaport and refineries run by Conoco-Phillips, ExxonMobil, Citgo and Shell, nearly all 70,000 residents had evacuated. Several riverboat casinos, which mostly serve tourists from Texas, closed ahead of the storm. — AP

Rain havoc in Rajasthan, Uttaranchal, U.P.: 8 killed

NEW DELHI: Eight persons, including four children, were killed in Rajasthan, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh over the weekend as torrential rain pounded the region since Friday triggering flash floods and landslides.

Four children were killed in their sleep when a boulder rolled down and fell on their hillside hut at Tatgarh village in Ajmer district of Rajasthan, police said.

Incessant rain has been lash-

ing the desert State for the past two days with Udaipurwati in Jhunjhunu district recording 164 mm of rainfall.

Three women were washed away in flash floods in Nainital district while landslides hit the Mukki area in Uttarkashi district of Uttaranchal disrupting the yatra to Gangotri temple.

The pilgrimages to Badrinath, Kedarnath and Yamunotri shrines were continuing despite

incessant rain since Friday, officials said.

One person was killed and 15 injured in Muzaffarnagar district in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh as several houses collapsed in heavy rain, the police said.

They said traffic on the Delhi-Dehra Dun highway was disrupted as a portion of the road was damaged.

Most major rivers including the Ganga and the Yamuna and

their tributaries are swollen and flowing close to the danger level.

The heavy rains are attributed by the weatherman to a low-pressure trough over south-eastern Rajasthan adjoining eastern UP.

Delhi had recorded 31 mm of rainfall between 8-30 a.m. and 2-30 p.m. on Saturday. Many areas in the city were inundated leading to traffic jams.

Four persons were injured

near the All India Radio headquarters on Parliament Street after a tree fell on a car.

In Himachal Pradesh, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti had another spell of moderate snowfall while several areas in mid and lower hills had intermittent rain. — PTI.

See also Page 3

Texas grapples with Rita

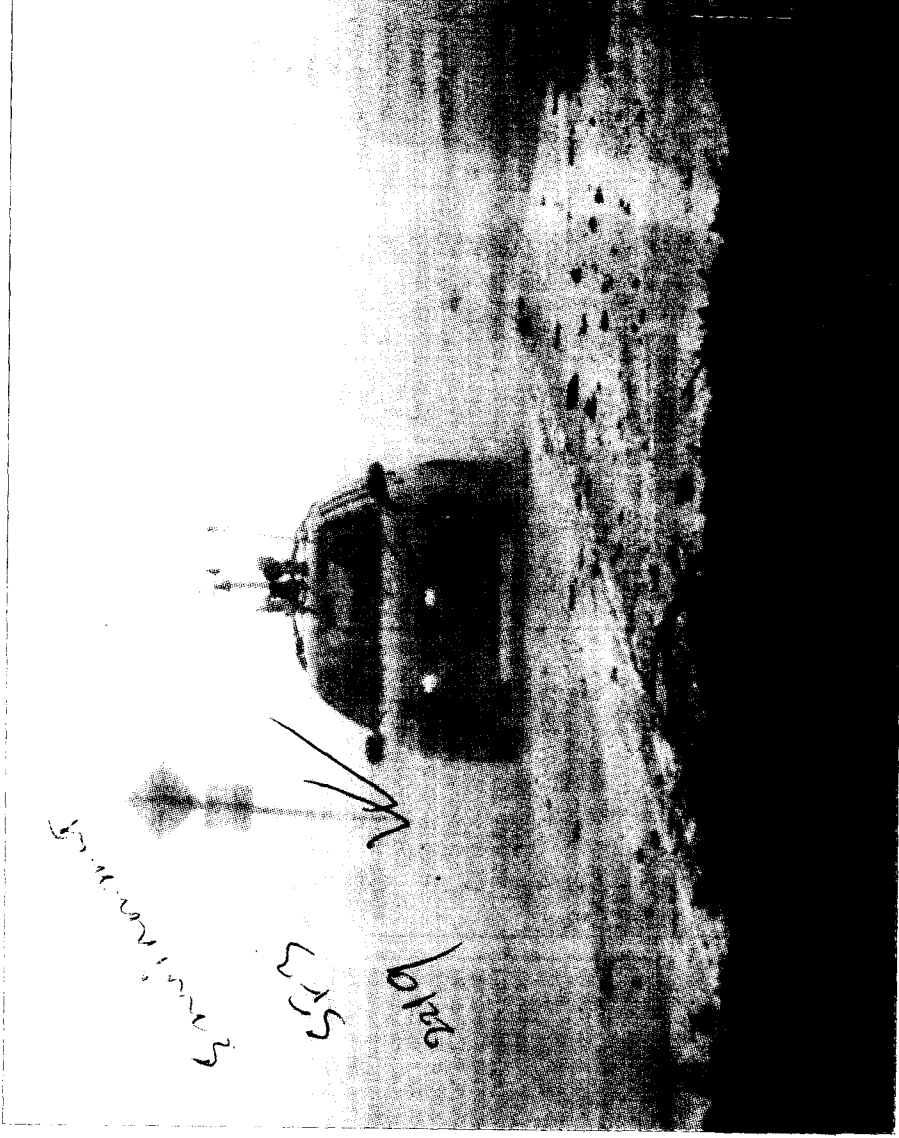
Rupert Cornwell in Washington

Sept. 21. — The geographical heart of the US oil industry braced for the worst yesterday as Hurricane Rita, packing winds of 140 mph, bore down on the eastern Texas coast, its sights apparently set on the Galveston and Houston area accounting for a quarter of the US refining capacity.

Yesterday afternoon, the storm brushed the Florida Keys as a manageable Category Two hurricane. Less than 24 hours later it had been upgraded to a Category Four, the second most powerful, with fears that it might grow stronger still before it made landfall, probably around dawn on Saturday. Across the region, city and state authorities prepared for a direct strike.

In Galveston, where a hurricane in 1900 killed some 8,000 people in the deadliest natural disaster in US history, buses started to ferry the 58,000 inhabitants to Huntsville, north of Houston, following the mandatory evacuation ordered by the mayor.

However, some 72 hours before the arrival of the storm, Galveston was a virtual ghost town, its streets empty, its shops and stores locked and shuttered. And the dislocation and disruption caused by Rita will be economic as well as human. — **The Independent**



A car drives down a water covered street as Hurricane Rita passes by Key West, Florida, on Tuesday — AFP

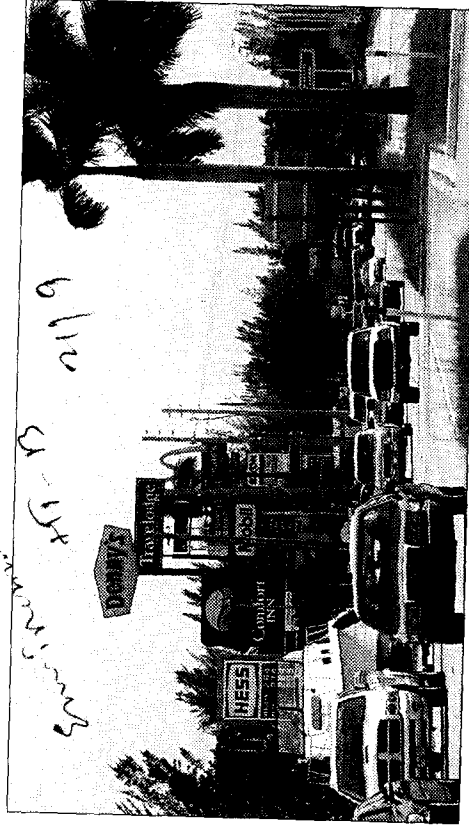
After Katrina, Rita bares her fangs

JAMES Sturcke & Agencies
New Orleans, September 20

THE MAYOR of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, has suspended the reopening of large portions of the city and ordered most people to evacuate as the latest violent storm closes in on the battered region. Tropical storm Rita gathered strength after passing through the Bahamas and hit the Florida Keys as a hurricane before possibly moving to areas already devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

"I'd rather err on the side of conservatism to make sure we have everyone out," Nagin said late last night. The announcement came after repeated warnings from federal officials and President George Bush, that New Orleans was not safe enough to reopen. Among other things, officials warned that Rita could breach the city's temporarily patched-up levees, causing the city to flood again.

The news came as the state health department raised the death toll from



A stream of vehicles head out of Florida City after the evacuation warning.

Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana by 90 to 736. The toll across the Gulf Coast was 973. New Orleans authorities requested 200 buses to help in an evacuation, the mayor's officials said.

Bush said he was concerned Rita could hit the already devastated Gulf Coast as he prepared for a fifth trip to the region to survey hurricane recovery efforts. He begins the tour in

Gulfport, Mississippi, holding a meeting with leaders from local businesses and government.

All 80,000 residents were ordered out of the Florida Keys on Monday and the Miami-Dade mayor, Carlos Alvarez, cautioned southern Florida not to dismiss the power of the coming storm. Schools, many government offices and some businesses were closed.

Rita, the 17th tropical storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, battered the Bahamas with 70mph winds but no substantial damage was reported. It strengthened into a hurricane on Tuesday as it lashed the Florida Keys with heavy rain and strong wind, threatening the island chain with a storm surge of up to 7 feet and sparking fears the storm could eventually bring new misery to the Gulf Coast. Thousands of residents and tourists had fled the Keys in advance of Rita, which forecasters said could dump up to 15 inches of rain on parts of the low-lying island chain.

The Guardian

Global warming could end Sahara droughts

DAVID Adam
London, September 16

GLOBAL WARMING could significantly increase rainfall in Saharan Africa within a few decades, potentially ending the severe droughts that have devastated the region, a new study suggests. The discovery was made by climate experts at the Royal Meteorological Institute in De Bilt, the Netherlands, who used a computer model to predict changes in the Sahel region — a wide belt stretching from the Atlantic to the horn of Africa that includes Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti.

Global warming will heat the land more than the sea, leading to changes in air pressure and weather. When the Netherlands team simulated this effect and combined it with warming caused by the expected rises in greenhouse

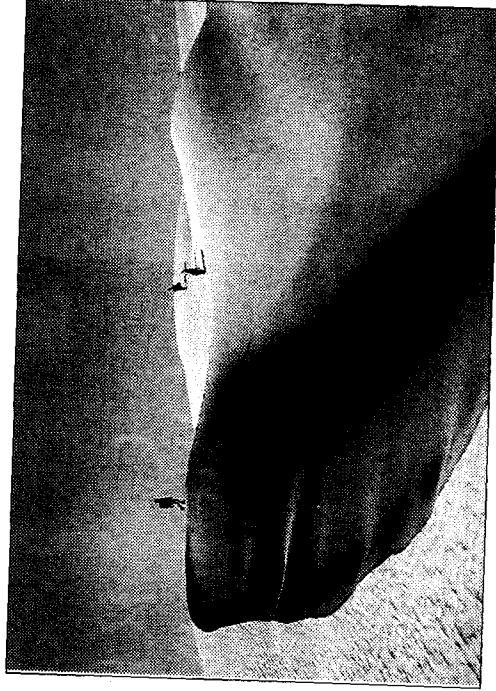
gas emissions between 1980 and 2080, they found Sahel rainfall in the July to September period jumped 1 to 2 millimetres a day.

Some scientists suspected that global warming might increase rainfall in the region, causing the so-called greening of the Sahara, but these are the biggest predicted increases so far.

Writing in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, the scientists say the increased rainfall could "strongly reduce the probability of prolonged droughts".

Reindert Haarsma, who led the research, said: "We were surprised that it was such a big rainfall signal. There is a lot of uncertainty in this kind of prediction but it is possible the Sahara region could benefit from climate change."

Sediments from the region



suggest the semi-arid Sahel region, which borders the southern edge of the Sahara desert, was filled with lakes and lush vegetation as recently as 5,500 years ago. Countries in the Sa-

hel have suffered unpredictable swings in rainfall, leading to severe drought between the 1970s and 1990s. The cause of the droughts remains a mystery: some

blame climate change and others say it is down to farmers destroying surface vegetation. Satellite images suggest vegetation in the region has recovered significantly over the last 15 years, pushing the southern Sahara into retreat.

Professor Haarsma cautioned against reading too much into the new results. The computer models were simple and did not include confounding factors like vegetation.

Peter Cox, of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Dorset, said: "This looks like an interesting study. However, the conclusion that Sahelian rainfall will increase under climate change must be considered as highly uncertain. Models differ in their predictions, with about as many showing decreases in rainfall as in-

Nasa satellites to study clouds

Los Angeles, September 16

NASA IS poised to launch two weather satellites next month to study the structure of clouds and learn more about how they affect weather and climate change.

The CloudSat and Calipso satellites are set to launch no earlier than October 26 aboard a Boeing Delta 2 rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base. The satellites will join three currently orbiting instruments and give scientists their first three-dimensional view of clouds and microscopic airborne particles called aerosols.

Current weather satellites can only see through the uppermost layers of clouds. CloudSat carries advanced radar to slice through clouds to view their structure. Calipso has an instrument to detect aerosol particles and distinguish them from cloud particles.

The Guardian

AP

Katrina's floods leave New Orleans a nowhere land

New Orleans (Louisiana): Each day, retreating floods surrender more of New Orleans shattered streets, exposing an eerie, silent wasteland often unfit for man or beast.

Stinking slime residue bakes into a thick ash-like dust in the roasting late summer sun. Here and there, by a curbside or in a pothole, water laced with sewage stagnates.

The tragedy of the people of New Orleans is written in their possessions, stolen by the floods and strewn over empty streets drying out two weeks after Hurricane Katrina's deadly storm surge.

Most poignant are the children's toys: a miniature jeep sits fouled by mud on the central median of a road where it floated far from its owner's home. A toy tractor lays upside down on a sidewalk in the Mid-City district next to a rotting apple. Nearby, a book, titled "Children's Favourites: Favourite Mystery Stories" hangs open from a downed electric wire, where it was ferried by the floods.

Across the road, a bedraggled Fourth of July wreath, with a paper American flag, on someone's front door recalls a happier time, when people went about their yearly rituals oblivious of impending disaster.

Miles and miles of residential areas



A Katrina victim looks at the level of floodwaters in his house

are deserted, dirtied and ghostly quiet. Most people evacuated before the storm. It would almost be possible to drive through suburbs rich and poor without seeing another person.

Here and there, squads of soldiers patrol still drying streets in high wheeled trucks. Abandoned boats are everywhere, some still tied to lamp-posts, or sitting absurdly in the streets where they ran aground.

Outside one house in the Claiborne district on Tuesday, soldiers stretched a tarpaulin over a body, grotesquely parked by receding floodwaters on somebody's front hedge.

In some middle class homes, mosquito nets draped over elegant verandas have been slashed, evidence perhaps that people were rescued by boat, from waters which left a dirty tidemark two metres high on white cladding.

Historians will be able to chart the social story of New Orleans in the early 21st century by examining whose homes were consumed by floods. Poor and lower middle class people were hit disproportionately hard, as they live in low lying areas most prone to flooding.

The rich and the upper middle class who dwell in sometimes palatial homes in the higher Garden District emerged untouched. Some of them were out clearing hurricane debris and even mowing their lawns as if this was any other day.

Across town, in one of New Orleans most deprived areas—in the shadow of the notorious Superdome sports auditorium where thousands took refuge—doors of tenement type housing flapped open in the breeze.

Taxis lay where they had been left by the water. Several hearses, stolen by looters, lay abandoned and fouled by muddy waters. In the back of one, someone with a ghoulish sense of humour has left a mannequin. Agencies

Ominous Ophelia stalks coast

Salvo (North Carolina), Sept. 13 (Reuters): Tropical Storm Ophelia threatened to strengthen back into a hurricane as it wobbled toward the southeast US coast today and sent thousands of people packing from North Carolina's barrier islands.

Ophelia's centre was 232 km south of Wilmington, North Carolina. The storm was creeping north-northwest and was expected to turn

north and hit the North Carolina coast tomorrow night and Thursday, the forecasters said.

Ophelia had sat off the North and South Carolina coast for four days, alternately strengthening into a hurricane and weakening back to a tropical storm.

At 1200 GMT, it was a tropical storm with 112 kmph winds but was expected to cross the 119 kmph threshold to become a hurricane again

by tomorrow, forecasters at the US National Hurricane Center said.

Along the 160-km chain of barrier islands known as the Outer Banks, mandatory evacuation orders were issued for all 20,000 people on Hatteras Island, a popular vacation spot that includes Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

"Today is our window of opportunity and we are asking everyone to leave," said Sandy

Sanderson, emergency management coordinator for Dare County, which includes Hatteras Island.

North Carolina officials also ordered everyone off of tiny Ocracoke, a low-lying island reachable only by boat or plane, and told visitors to leave coastal Onslow County. Authorities urged people to voluntarily leave other barrier islands, lowlands and coastal towns in North and South Carolina.

Drought casts its long shadow

Result: Major kharif crop failure; paddy, sugarcane hard hit

Team HT
New Delhi, September 9

JHARKHAND HAS been declared drought-hit, neighbouring Bihar has received 30 per cent less rainfall, western Uttar Pradesh has a similar shortfall and the problem in most parts of North India is coming close.

The story of the monsoon blues in India's rural hinterland this year is not just about farmers sowing less, but farmers struggling to keep their crops alive and productive. Agricultural scientists, such as Dr V. Bharadwaj at the G.B. Pant Agriculture University in Pant Nagar, are already worried. A less-than-normal rainfall through August and September — when most kharif crops reach the flowering stage — could impact crop production, he says. Dhanraj Singh of Saharanpur is one of the lakhs of farmers across the cow-belt who may have to bear the brunt. He has a standing crop of sugarcane, wheat and paddy across his 150-bigha plot, but is not sure how much of it will survive the moisture stress.

Low rainfall over the past few years has already pulled down the water table. Singh has access to a tube-well, but is not sure how long it will work. And whether lower crop yields would be worth an additional investment. Bhagat Singh of Bheekampur village does not think it will. "It's a costly affair now and we can't afford it", Bhagat Singh said.

Vice-chancellor of Govind Ballabh Pant Agriculture University, Dr P.P. Singh said most of the fields had developed cracks and the crops of paddy, sugarcane and fodder are in bad shape facing the consequences of an erratic monsoon. Three-fourths of the fodder crop has dried up and the growth of sugarcane has been hit because of a lack of water. The damage, he cautioned, extended beyond the foodgrain and would impact the quantity and quality of fruits, such as mangoes and litchis.

UP's principal secretary, agriculture, G. Patnaik acknowledged that the state was witnessing a "drought-like situation" and farmers could be in trouble if it did not rain with-



in the next 10 days.

Rain deficiency has crossed 20 per cent in UP this season; it was closer to 30 per cent in western UP. Last week made it worse. IMD says western UP received 13 mm; 43 mm would have been considered normal. The situation was similar elsewhere in most of North and central India. Twenty of the 36 subdivisions that IMD divides India into received deficient or scanty rainfall last week.

Intermittent rains in the Malwa and Nimar regions of Madhya Pradesh might have saved

the withering crops, but experts suggested kharif production would still drop by at least 10 to 15 per cent. Jharkhand — the only state to be declared drought-hit so far — was one of them. It is home to nearly 2.3 million people below the poverty line, and the scanty rainfall has already made sustenance difficult for most of the 400,000 farmers. The state has recorded 67.4 per cent plantation of paddy crop, 54.2 per cent pulse crops and 51.8 per cent oil-seed crops. Altogether 16 districts have reported below-average rainfall in July

and August.

Till a few weeks ago, farmers growing such crops as paddy and potato in Punjab and Haryana had assumed they had nothing to worry about. Not any longer. The extended dry spell is changing that, especially with crops in some areas getting infested with the bacterial leaf blight disease, which compounds with high temperature. Elusive rains might thus make it worse.

In Rajasthan, the recent scattered rainfall has helped, but would be rather limited. State agriculture director Manoj Sharma said it could revive such crops as bajra, jowar, soyabean and maize to a certain extent, but not pulses. But it might be too late for farmers in the Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions, who had largely sown pulses and jowar, which have already withered away. At 126 lakh hectares, sowing was already lower than last year's 135 lakh hectares. Erratic rains might reduce productivity, as well.

Chattisgarh isn't as bad, but revenue minister Brijmohan Agarwal cautions it could be. Twenty-one tehsils are on the brink of drought and another 32 tehsils could share this fate if it does not rain over the next week. Jaspur, Sarguja and Bastar have received 30 per cent deficient rainfall, prompting the state to seek assistance of Rs 500 crore.

Adjoining Orissa is also staring at a drought-like situation looming large. Nearly 21 of the state's 30 districts have received less-than-normal rainfall and officials suggest that rainfall during the past 48 hours would not be able to rescue the moisture-stressed paddy crop in many areas.

Officials at the Indian Council for Agriculture Research suggest Bihar, a poorly irrigated state, might have to suffer the most. The state has received a 30 per cent deficit rainfall, with Nawada, Gaya, Nalanda, Aurangabad and others in the old Magadh range being counted as the worst-affected. Officials estimate a foodgrain production of nearly 30 lakh tons, half of what they had projected before the monsoon started playing truant.

SHORT TAKES



REUTERS
Kareena Kapoor at a photo call in Mumbai on Friday

Another ONGC rig catches fire

THERE WAS another flare-up at an exploratory well of the ONGC in Andhra Pradesh early on Friday. Though the fire had been under control on Thursday night, it flared up again in the early hours of Friday. However, the ONGC officials said the flames were not as huge as they were on Thursday and expressed hope that the blaze would be controlled in the next few days. Fire had broken out in the exploratory well in Thandavapalli village near Amalapuram in East Godavari district around 11.30 am on Thursday due to a sudden increase in gas pressure.

IANS, Hyderabad

Poll panel raps Bihar Governor

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 9

IN A severe indictment of the appointments made to various constitutional bodies by Bihar Governor Buta Singh, the Election Commission on Friday said these were done in gross violation of the model code of conduct.

A two-member team sent to Patna by the EC to probe the appointments following complaints from the BJP said in its report that the appointments to various positions in the Bihar State Minorities Commission, State Commission for Backward Classes and 15-Point Programme Implementation Committee were notified by the state gov-

ernment on September 3 — much after the code of conduct came into effect.

The team said appointments to all the three bodies were cleared on September 2, when the code of conduct had already come into effect.

While acting on the report, the Election Commission ordered that status quo be maintained with regard to non-statutory bodies, such as the 15-point Programme Implementation Committee and Bihar State Nagrik Parishad.

The commission, in a letter to the Bihar chief secretary, said it was the duty of the Bihar officers to have apprised the Governor of the model code of conduct having come into force before issuing the

Cong tones down stand on Paswan

THE CONGRESS on Friday played down its tough stand against the LJP's Ram Vilas Paswan. After signalling that he should quit the UPA if he failed to come on board with the RJD-led combine in Bihar, AICC general secretary and state in-charge Digvijay Singh said it was neither his nor the Congress's view that Paswan should leave the coalition. "But we have to consult all parties on the issue", he said amid speculation that Lalu Prasad was pressuring the Congress to arm-twist Paswan into leaving the UPA.

notifications in pursuance of his orders on the relevant files.

While observing that the Governor had cleared the long-pending files on the eve of the announcement of the

poll schedule, Election Commission sources said, "The officers have thus failed the proper discharge of the duties and functions to serve the model code in letter and in spirit".

Touch and go for crops in thirsty states

Grain basket in rain shadow

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Striking deficits in rainfall this year across India's northern grain basket states have raised concerns about the yields of pulses, maize and oilseeds, agriculture meteorologists said today.

The monsoon so far has been nearly 8 per cent below normal for the country as a whole, but the rainfall deficits in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have ranged between 20 and 30 per cent, meteorologists have said.

"For some crops, it's going to be touch and go," said Lakshman Singh Rathore, a senior scientist at National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting, an institute that issues advisories for farmers.

A prolonged spell of dry weather in northwest India in August is expected to take a toll on crop productivity, but the severity of impact would depend on rainfall behaviour in the next few days, he said.

Some parts of Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan have received rainfall over the past 24 hours and atmospheric conditions portend more rain in the northwest in the next two days.

The Indian Meteorological

DRY RUN

West Rajasthan	-39%
Jharkhand	-37%
West Uttar Pradesh	-28%
Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura	-28%
East Rajasthan	-23%
West Madhya Pradesh	-23%
Delhi, Haryana	-23%
Punjab	-22%
Assam, Meghalaya	-20%
Gangetic Bengal	-17%

Figures represent rainfall below normal. A state is a deficit state when rain is 20% or more below normal

Department has also predicted widespread rain over Andhra, central India and the western coastal states. But rainfall is likely to be subdued over Uttar Pradesh.

Paddy is the principal summer crop in Punjab, but most of it is irrigated. Scientists say they are worried about productivity of pulses, maize, oilseeds and pearl millet.

"Where soil retains water, we'll see low impact, where it does not retain water, we'll see a more severe impact," a scientist at the Punjab Agricultural University said. "Pulses are more susceptible to water stress," Rathore said.

"The prolonged hot and dry weather in August had pushed the groundnut crop in

Gujarat to the verge of collapse, but with good rains over the past two days, it'll probably be saved," Rathore said.

The dry weather in August was marked by strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity across northwest India. "Strong winds cause mechanical and physiological stress on crops," he said.

The IMD analysis of the rainfall from the start of the monsoon season on June 1 through September 7 shows that nine of India's 36 weather subdivisions have received deficit — 20 per cent or more below normal — rainfall.

The worst rainfall performance has been in western Rajasthan with 39 per cent below normal, but Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand all have deficits between 20 and 37 per cent.

The long range forecast issued by the IMD this May had predicted normal rainfall. The monsoon season, in weather science, does not get over until the end of September. So, the IMD may have yet another chance to issue fresh figures.

Among the four broad regions, only the southern peninsula received 10 per cent above normal rainfall. The northwest had minus 20 per cent, northeast minus 19 per cent and central India minus 1 per cent.

TYPHOON TERROR

NABI APPROACHES SOUTHERN JAPAN; TALIM CLAIMS 100 LIVES IN CHINA

AP & PTI

TOKYO/BEIJING, Sept. 5. — A powerful typhoon approached southern Japan today — lashing the region with heavy rains and strong winds, injuring at least 6 people and forcing thousands of people to evacuate, while hundreds of flights were cancelled — even as at least 100 people were killed and more than eight million displaced by Typhoon Talim in four east Chinese provinces. Typhoon Nabi was set to hit China's Zhejiang province also, late night reports indicated.

Typhoon Nabi was packing winds of up to 162 kmph as it slowly barreled toward Japan's southernmost main island of Kyushu, Japan's Met agency said. As of tonight, the typhoon was located about 150 km south of Yakushima island. It was expected to hit Kyushu island at midnight tonight and head northeast.

Nabi, which means butterfly in Korean, was



Bicycles pushed over by Typhoon Nabi that was heading towards Japan, at a ferry port in Kagoshima on Monday. — AFP

expected to reach western Japan and Hokkaido by Wednesday, the Met agency said.

In Miyazaki prefecture on Kyushu, two women (87) and (51), suffered head injuries as they were sprayed with shards of broken windows hit by the wind, while a 51-year-old man fell from a verandah and suffered bruises, the national police agency said.

More than 3,600 fami-

lies were evacuated due to fear of flood and landslide in the area, public broadcaster NHK reported.

In China, in addition to the deaths, the direct economic losses from torrential rains, flooding and landslides were estimated at \$960 million, mainly in the eastern Fujian, Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi province. In the worst-hit Anhui province, the death toll has risen to 59.

E-waste protest at Wipro doorstep

B.R. SRIKANTH

Bangalore, Sept. 5: Greenpeace activists today launched a campaign against the stockpile of e-waste, dumping about half a tonne of electronic gadgets at the corporate headquarters of Wipro here.

A dozen activists of the Indian unit of Greenpeace said they acquired Wipro-branded e-waste from illegal recycling yards in New Delhi, Chennai and Bangalore.

They alleged that several companies were selling old computers, telecom equipment, television sets and refrigerators — all sources of hazardous chemicals — to junk dealers who burn them in illegal yards for extraction of metals, including gold and cadmium.

The toxic gases released during unscientific recycling processes can cause several diseases, including cancer. "We consider the only way to deal with the growing problem of e-wastes is for the corporates to design clean electronics with longer lifespan that are safe and easy to recycle without exposing workers and the environment to hazardous chemicals," Greenpeace India's Ramapati Kumar said.

Kumar said Wipro Infotech officials, led by chief administrative officer Balagiridhar, agreed to discuss the issue of e-waste management with Greenpeace members early next



Greenpeace activists at the protest in Bangalore. (PTI)

month. "Wipro, an iconic Indian brand, prides itself on its strength in the technology and enterprise domains. It's high time it used these strengths to make the much-needed shift to clean production and build a competitive edge by introducing products that do not cause harm to the environment or to people," Kumar said.

Greenpeace has appealed to firms that roll out electronic goods to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their products and substitute them with safe alternatives. "Companies should take extended producer responsibility for all their products, from the production cycle to the end of the products' life cycle," Kumar said.

A spokesman for Wipro, however, denied that the company's products, including personal computers and peripherals, were sent to recycling

yards for disposal. "We sell our electronic products to institutional and retail buyers through our distribution network. Once they buy, we have no control over what they do with the end-products," the spokesman said.

"The disposal of old or outdated products is a larger issue. Unless the whole ecosystem is changed, the problem of e-waste remains. The whole industry has to address the issue. There is a need for research and manufacture of electronic products with plastic materials that are bio-degradable and avoid using toxic materials," he added.

Sources in the Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology said this tech hub could, by the end of the year, choke under a heap of e-waste generated by the IT industry.

Is Bt cotton unsuitable?

Bt cotton is the most potent and best available option for bollworm management in the country

K.R. Kranthi

SUMAN SAHAI wrote in *The Hindu* of August 29, 2005, that our research article (Kranthi *et al.*, *Current Science*, July 25, 2005) gives scientific reasons for the failure of Monsanto Bt cotton varieties in India. She points out that our paper shows that the technology is faulty and does not protect against the bollworm; hence the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) must be made accountable for the losses for poor farmers. Dr. Sahai argues further that because this information was available by the end of 2003, the Director-General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), who is an *ex-officio* member of the GEAC, should have raised his voice to stop any further releases of Bt cotton. Does our research paper support her argument? It does not.

Our report does not provide evidence to say that the technology is ineffective or flawed, as Dr. Sahai wants the world to believe. It shows that the technology works for most part of the season, but also has a few inherent inadequacies. That does not take away the merit of the technology. It only asks for improvements to be made. We never mentioned in the *Current Science* paper or elsewhere that the technology was ineffective or unsustainable as it is made out to be. Despite the shortcomings mentioned in our paper, Bt cotton is still the most potent and best available option for bollworm management in India. Even the best of the currently available pesticides do not kill more than 70-80 per cent bollworm larvae under field conditions, which Bt cotton does. Hence, the Bt technology is considered to be more effective than the best of currently recommended pesticides against *H. armigera*.

Unmatched bio-safety

With an unmatched bio-safety profile, incomparable to that of conventional pesticides, Bt cotton is most sought after by farmers not just because of its efficacy in effective bollworm control, but also because it makes cotton cultivation easier and healthier with fewer pesticides to spray. If anything, the GEAC had been over-cautious in releasing Bt cotton in India. The approvals were also based on our own results of three-year scientific field trial evaluation data, which consistently showed yield and ecological benefits from Bt cotton despite the minor inadequacies in toxin expression. I have had a chance to attend a few GEAC meetings as an invited expert. If our data were detrimental to the Indian farmer's interest, wouldn't I have pointed out this to the members when I attended these meetings? So would have the Director-General of ICAR, who is known to be forthright with his views on all issues concerning good science and technologies for farmer welfare. Bt cotton has now been endorsed by thousands of farmers ever since its introduction in 2002, as can be seen from immense popularity and enormous technology adoption rate. It is unfortunate that the NGOs are trying to wage a meaningless war against the GM technology by misinterpreting some selective portions of our scientific paper.

Indeed, our paper describes the seasonal decline of Cry1Ac toxin levels and its variability in various plant parts of a few Bt cotton hybrids. We also said that, "the toxin expression in the boll-rind, square bud and ovary of flowers was clearly inadequate to confer full protection to the fruiting parts." Interestingly two papers were published from China and Australia around the same time in 2005, in an American journal, *Journal of Economic Entomology*, describing almost similar data to point out a seasonal decline of the Cry1Ac toxin in their Bt cotton varieties and low toxin levels in ovules and bolls. Does this make Bt cotton ineffective against bollworm? The answer is 'no'.

We said in our paper very clearly that "despite the variability in toxin expres-

sion, the pest control properties are unlikely to be affected significantly at least until the crop becomes 100-115 days old. Though some larvae survived on various plant parts in *in vitro* bioassays, the surviving larvae on all the parts were stunted with a weight reduction of 48.8 to 98 per cent, compared to the larvae on non-Bt cotton plants." The cotton bollworm (*Helicoverpa armigera*) generally infests cotton 60-120 days after sowing. While Bt cotton is highly effective 60-115 days after sowing, there are chances of bollworm causing damage during the remaining one to two weeks. We therefore recommended pest scouting and need-based supplemental sprays for this period. We did not mention in our paper a commonly known fact that majority (70-80 per cent) of bollworm eggs are laid on leaves of the upper canopy and neonate larvae scrape and feed on the surface of the leaf soon after hatching and get killed. Eggs laid directly on flowers or a few other fruiting parts may survive, depending on the levels of toxin expression. Thus in an overall analysis, Bt cotton controls at least about 70-80 per cent of bollworm infestation. This is very significant in economic and environmental terms.

We never said that Cry1Ac expression was more in varieties compared to hybrids. We speculated that the relatively higher efficacy of Bt cotton varieties on *H. armigera* in China and Australia may have been because of the use of straight varieties in these countries compared to the use of hybrids in India. However, the recent data published on the Bt cotton varieties of China and Australia – showing expression levels in their varieties similar, if not less than, to those of the hybrids in India – do not support this speculation either. However, I would like to re-emphasise that Bt straight varieties would have the advantage of Cry1Ac expression in all of the seeds in green bolls as against the segregating 75 per cent Bt seeds in the bolls of F1 hybrid plants as mentioned in our paper. Hence Indian researchers including our own group at the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur, must intensify the efforts to develop Bt straight varieties for the use of Indian farmers.

Why did we publish this data? We wanted farmers to appreciate what exactly was to be expected from the technology. Importantly, our main intention was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the technology so that it can be improved further. We pointed out some inherent inadequacies that need to be addressed by all concerned so that the technology can become more potent. We suggested that, "1. Biotechnology efforts in India should focus on developing transgenic cotton varieties with tissue specific promoters to enhance the expression of the toxin genes in fruiting parts, and 2. The choice of parental background is crucial for sustainable expression of the Cry1Ac transgene and therefore seed companies should evaluate their hybrids critically for highest levels of expression in fruiting parts and also for relatively effective level of toxin expression late in the season." We concluded our paper by making our objective clear that, "Since the Bt-transgenic technology has thus far proven itself to be one of the most environment-friendly methods of bollworm management, it is in the interest of the technology itself that researchers, technology providers and administrators ensure that it must be provided to the farmers in a form which gives the best possible returns for the investment."

I earnestly hope that the meaningless hullabaloo raised over Bt cotton by the NGOs comes to an end soon and that a brilliant technology such as Bt cotton, which is state-of-the-art in eco-friendly cotton pest management, will be improved further and stabilised in good varieties and hybrids so as to ensure a pesticide-free profitable and sustainable cotton pest management in India.

(The writer is Senior Scientist, CICR, Nagpur)

Floods, landslides raise China typhoon toll

AGENCIES

Beijing, September 4

LANDSLIDES AND flooding have killed at least 24 more people in southeastern China, the official Xinhua News Agency reported on Sunday, adding to a rising death toll caused by torrential rains. At least 64 people were killed, dozens went missing and nearly five million people affected by Typhoon Talim which ravaged the east Chinese provinces of Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi.

Some 19 deaths were reported over the past two days in Yuexi, a county in Anhui province, where more than 10,000 houses have been destroyed and 210,000 forced from their homes or otherwise affected, Xinhua said. More than 30,000 people have been evacuated from the area and 200 rescued from floodwaters, it said. Roads, telephone exchanges, electricity and water supplies in the area have been either knocked out or badly damaged, the report said.

Another five people in neighbouring Jiangxi province were killed and at least eight were missing after flooding and landslides between Thursday and Sunday, Xinhua said.

Around China, at least 82 peo-

ple — possibly many more — have died in storms, floods and landslides brought on by Typhoon Talim when it plowed into mainland China last week, according to sometimes conflicting official media reports. Nearly one million people were evacuated due to the storm and there have been reports of extensive damage to buildings and crops. Mountainous, landlocked Anhui has reported 63 deaths, with 14 deaths reported in Wenzhou, a southeastern port city. Fujian province, where the typhoon roared ashore on Thursday, also reported at least 10 deaths. In Anhui, heavy rains and mudslides caused by the storm destroyed 17,200 houses, Xinhua said. The report said local authorities were rushing emergency supplies to survivors.

Talim had weakened to a tropical storm by late Thursday and Xinhua didn't say how it killed so many people in an inland area where its winds and rains would have been less powerful. Earlier reports said the hardest-hit area was near Dabie Mountain in Anhui. Mountainous areas in China often suffer torrential flash floods in storms, due to excessive tree-cutting and farming that leave stripped hillsides, leaving



Residents of Anhui province evacuate their flooded neighbourhood in a boat on Sunday.

REUTERS

the ground unable to trap rain. Talim also killed two in Taiwan as it churned across the island on its way west.

According to preliminary statistics, a total of 2.22 million people in 335 townships of 18 coun-

ties have been affected in cities of Wenzhou and Lishui, both located in southern part of Zhejiang. Nearly 12,000 houses were destroyed. The direct economic loss was put at 421.7 million US dollars, local government said.

Over 7,000 houses and four lakh acres of crops were destroyed and 2.21 million affected in Jiangxi. Figures released by the headquarters show that total economic losses were estimated at about US\$200 million.

More troops for New Orleans: Bush

Five days after Katrina, victims get food, water

ASSOCIATED Press
New Orleans, September 3

A DAY after the National Guard finally arrived in force and began mass evacuations, thousands of people remained behind on Saturday as fires belched ribbons of smoke over the city and sporadic gunfire echoed through the night.

President Bush announced he would send additional active duty forces to the Gulf Coast region. The decision came a day after he toured the region.

Thousands from the Superdome arrived in Texas on air-conditioned buses, but the operation stopped early on Saturday — with 2,000 in the stadium still to be evacuated five days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall. At the New Orleans Convention Center, where as many as 20,000 people have gathered since the storm, Jennifer Washington was among the frustrated evacuees who spent another morning waiting for buses to come.

"At first they said 6:30 this morning, then they said 9, but there are no buses. They promised us buses," said Washington, 25, who has four children but lost them in the storm.

Smoke billowed out of rows of warehouses on the east bank of the Mississippi River as corrugated roofs buckled and tiny explosions erupted. Gunfire — almost two dozen shots — broke out in the French Quarter about 2:15 am.

Every individual in the region — refugees and relief workers alike — have compelling tales to share. Emotions range from frustration and despair to hope and a deep desire to return to life as it was, just days ago — a likelihood that may never occur after the havoc wreaked by Katrina.

National Guard Lt. Col. Jerry Crooks said troops had served more than 70,000 meals outside the convention centre since Friday and had 130,000 more on hand. About a dozen people who

HURRICANE AFTERMATH

headed down the street to look for food and water were turned back by a soldier who pulled a gun. "We had to get something to eat. What are they doing pulling a gun?" said Richard Johnson, 28.

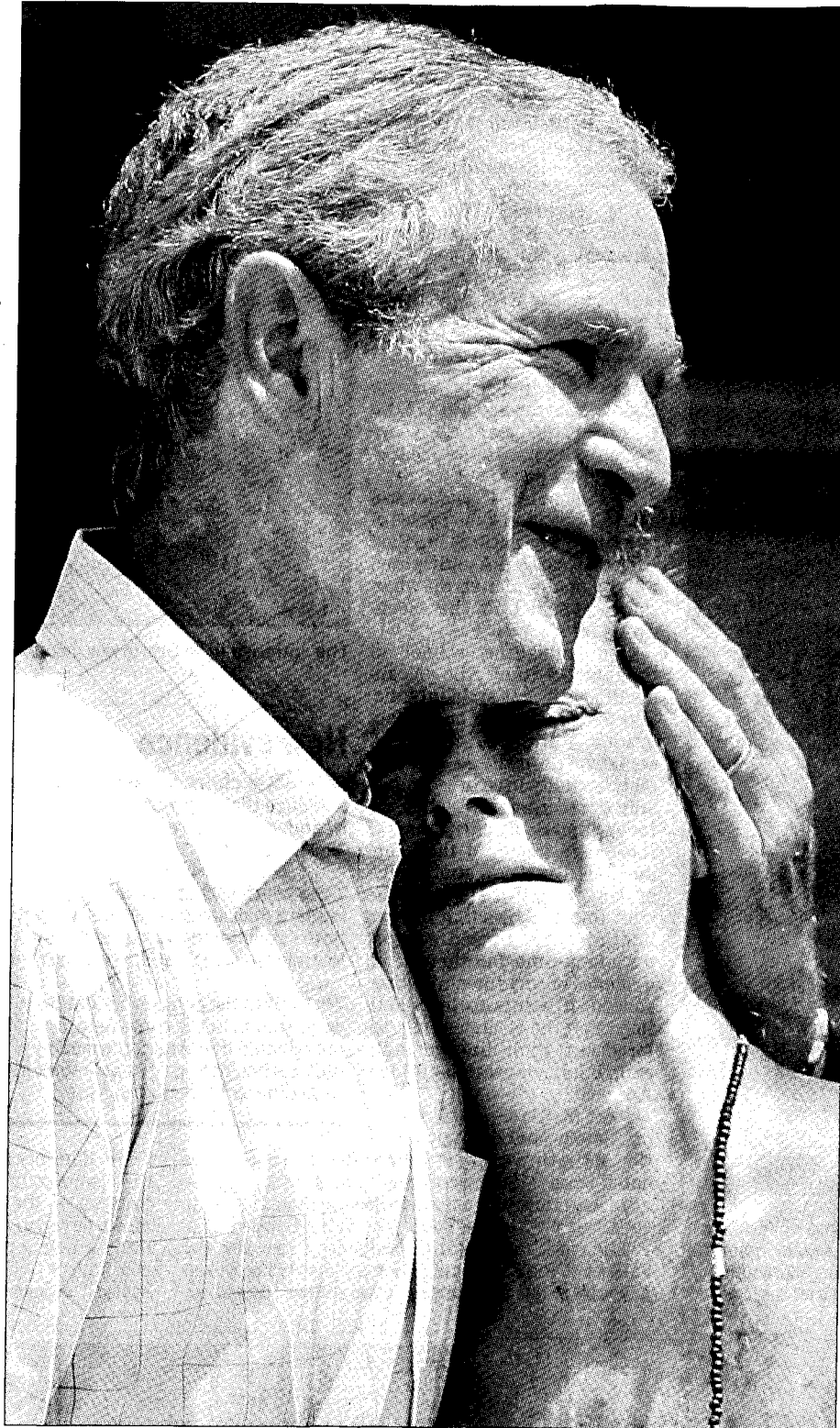
The soldiers' arrival-in-force came amid angry complaints from local officials that the federal government had bungled the relief effort and let people die in the streets for lack of food, water or medicine as the city was overtaken by looting, rape and arson. Two of the New Orleans' most troubled hospitals were evacuated after desperate doctors spent days making tough choices about which patients got dwindling supplies of food, water and medicines.

At noon on Friday, a National Guard convoy packed with food, water and medicine finally rolled through axle-deep floodwaters into what remained of New Orleans. A crowd of nearly 20,000 stood outside the New Orleans Convention Center the convoy arrived. Watching the caravan, Leschia Radford sang the praises of a higher power, while Nellie Washington demanded to know what the holdup had been.

In what looked like a scene from a Third World country, some outside the convention centre threw their arms heavenward and others hollered profanities as the trucks and hundreds of soldiers arrived in the punishing midday heat.

"They should have been here days ago," said 46-year-old Michael Levy, whose words were echoed by those around him yelling, "Hell, yeah!"

Flatbed trucks carried huge crates, pallets and bags of relief supplies, including Meals Ready to Eat. Soldiers sat in the backs of open-top trucks, their rifles pointing skyward.



President Bush consoles Deborah Foster, a Hurricane Katrina survivor, in Biloxi.

The race tangle to storm relief

New Orleans, September 3

WHILE HURRICANE Katrina had no deliberate target as it ravaged the Gulf Coast, in the aftermath it's clear that the victims are mostly black and mostly poor. So many photographs from the devastation of New Orleans show the same faces: Desperate. Grief-stricken. Black.

"Love has no colour," Cassandra Robinson said huddling with her family in a parking entrance along New Orleans' Convention Center Boulevard. "But I've seen where this is all black and everybody else who is Caucasian, they're up high in the hotels." In fact, those in hotels complained bitterly they also were neglected. But Robinson's comment echoes those of others who question the part race may have played in New Orleans' crippling crisis.

Would the response have been more urgent if the victims were white? Is economic class a factor even more than race? In Orleans Parish, 66.6 per cent of the residents are black.

New Orleans residents were divided not so much by race as by economic class. When 80 per cent of the city's population, according to the mayor, evacuated before Hurricane Katrina, that left behind those with no cars, no resources, no way out. Most of those families are black. There has been an outpouring of donations from throughout the US in response to the images seen in news coverage — but might it have been greater if those images did not show black faces?

"I think the nation would be responding differently if white elderly and white babies were dying on the street and being covered with newspapers and shrouds and being left there," said David Billings of The People's Institute, a 25-year-old New Orleans-based organisation focused on ending racism. Ben Burkett, a black farmer whose fields were wiped out, said he expects relief to be inherently biased. "The eye of the storm made everybody equal. But when the relief comes — and we haven't seen anything yet — the small farmer is going to be at the end, and the small black farmer is going to be at the end of that."

RAPPER CALLS BUSH RACIST

Grammy-winning rapper Kanye West accused President Bush of racism on a telethon benefit for Katrina victims. West, who is black, said the delays in providing relief to Katrina survivors were deliberate. He said the US was set up "to help the poor, the black people, the less well-off as slow as possible". *Reuters*

REUTERS

AP

38 Mahabaleshwar hotels ordered shut

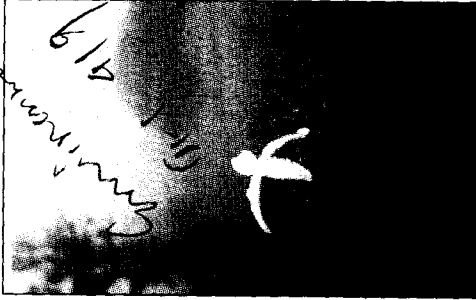
Pollution Board Zeroes In On Two Hill Stations For Dumping Waste In Lakes

By Pratulla Marpakwar/TNN

Mumbai: In what must be the most stringent punitive step it has taken so far, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) ordered the closure of 38 leading hotels in the eco-sensitive hill stations of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani for polluting Venna lake and the Koyna valley with untreated sewage.

The hotels have been officially charged with violating the Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. MPCB member secretary Dilip B Boralkar said the untreated sewage had left a toxic trail, forcing the board to take action.

"We have asked the local administration to disconnect electricity and water supply to these hotels with immediate effect," Boralkar told TOI. He said his office had on January 1, 2005 asked the hoteliers to upgrade their treatment facilities to comply with the Environment Protection Rules, 1986, and to provide common or indi-



SC calls for a quieter Ganpati

Mumbai: "Let Ganesh Chaturthi be celebrated peacefully this year," the supreme court said while declining a plea by the Maharashtra government for an interim order to relax, upto midnight, the ban on use of loudspeakers during the festival. The present ban applies to the use of loudspeakers in public places between 10 pm and 6 am.

tary said, "We were shocked that of the 180-odd hotels, 38 simply did not bother. We had no option but to order their closure." The MPCB's stringent action comes even as the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) has been fighting for years to protect these hill stations from deforestation and other environmental degradation. Two years ago, BEAG, in its PIL filed in the high court on the issue of sewage being dumped in the lakes, had pointed out that it was high time the MPCB acted against the erring hotels.

The NGO pointed out that the untreated sewage had formed a layer of black sludge in the lake, which is the source of drinking water for the region. The petition has been adjourned to September 13 to enable the Mahabaleshwar municipal corporation to detail its actions. The state has also been asked to report on that day how long it will take to demarcate the forest area in Mahabaleshwar. In 1998, the HC had asked the state to act against illegal construction and to protect the hill station.

vidual waste-processing facilities for their solid waste within three months.

Despite their being given enough time to make an application with a proposal for sewage effluent treatment plants, the secre-

পঞ্চানন্দপুরে গঙ্গা গিলে ফেলল বাজার, বিচ্ছিন্ন ১২টি গ্রাম

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, মালদহ: দু'ঘণ্টার ভাঙনে এ বার মালদহের পঞ্চানন্দপুরের নয়াবাজার তলিয়ে গেল। শনিবার দুপুরে গঙ্গার ভাঙন শুরু হলে মুহূর্তের মধ্যে তলিয়ে যায় ২০০টি দোকান, পঞ্চায়েত অফিস, শতবর্ষ প্রাচীন দুর্গামন্দির এবং একশোর বেশি বাড়ি। ভাঙনের সময়ে ঘুরপথে গঙ্গার জল পাগলা নদীতে ঢুকতে শুরু করে। ফলে কার্যত বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে পড়েছে এলাকার ১২টি গ্রাম। এ দিন ভোরে পাগলা ক্রোজারের কাছে ১০ মিটার এলাকা ভাঙনে তলিয়ে যায়। তখনই সেচ দফতর থেকে তড়িঘড়ি সেখানে ভাঙন আটকাতে কাজ শুরু করা হয়। কিন্তু দুপুরে ভাঙন প্রবল আকার নেয়। জেলার নির্বাহী সেচ আধিকারিক পুণ্ডরীকাক্ষ রায় বলেন, “আজ যে ভাঙন হবে, সেই ব্যাপারে আমরা নিশ্চিত ছিলাম। গঙ্গার জল নামতে শুরু করতেই ভাঙন শুরু হয়েছে। পরিস্থিতির দিকে নজর রাখা হচ্ছে। গঙ্গার জল পাগলা নদীতে মিশতে শুরু করেছে।” এ দিনের ভাঙনের জেরে এলাকার বিহারীটোলা, রামলালটোলা, সুলতানটোলা, জিনারদিটোলা ও লয়মনটোলা এলাকার বাসিন্দাদের মধ্যে আতঙ্ক তৈরি হয়।

তবে ‘বেডবার’কে সেচ ও ফরাঙ্কা ব্যারাজ কর্তৃপক্ষ ‘স্পার’ বানিয়ে ফেলাতেই এ বারও পঞ্চানন্দপুরে ভাঙন আটকানো সম্ভব হচ্ছে না বলে মনে করছেন কেন্দ্রীয় জলসম্পদ দফতরের টেকনিক্যাল অ্যাডভাইজার প্রসাদ সেন। শনিবার মালদহের পঞ্চানন্দপুরে সেচ দফতর ও বালুফাররায় ফরাঙ্কা ব্যারাজ কর্তৃপক্ষের ভাঙন প্রতিরোধের কাজ দেখতে গিয়ে তাঁর মাথায় হাত। কেন্দ্রীয় জল নিগম যেখানে ভাঙন আটকাতে বেডবার তৈরির নির্দেশ দিয়েছে, সেখানে সেচ ও ফরাঙ্কা ব্যারাজ কর্তৃপক্ষ স্পার তৈরি করে ফেলেছে।

প্রসাদবাবু বলেন, “বেডবার থাকবে জলের নীচে। স্রোতের তীব্রতা কিছুটা মছর করে দেবে। কিন্তু সেচ ও ফরাঙ্কা ব্যারাজ কর্তৃপক্ষ এখানে স্পার তৈরি করেছে। এতে ভাঙন আরও বাড়বে।” তবে জেলা সেচ দফতরের আধিকারিক পুণ্ডরীকাক্ষ রায় বলেন, “কেন্দ্রীয় জল নিগমে যে ভাবে বেডবার তৈরি করতে বলেছে, আমরা সে ভাবেই তো কাজ করেছি।” পঞ্চানন্দপুর ও সাকুল্লাপুরের বাসিন্দারা অবশ্য জলসম্পদ দফতরের টেকনিক্যাল অ্যাডভাইজারকে সামনে পেয়ে ওই স্পার এবং ভাঙন রোধের সময়েও কী ভাবে দুর্নীতি করা হয়েছে

তার তালিকা তুলে ধরেন।”

এ বার গঙ্গার ভাঙন আটকাতে রাজ্য ও কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার জেলা সেচ দফতর এবং ফরাঙ্কা ব্যারাজ কর্তৃপক্ষকে প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া নির্দেশ দেন। সুলতানপুর থেকে জোতকস্তুরি পর্যন্ত ৩ কিলোমিটার ভাঙন প্রতিরোধের জন্য রাজ্য সরকার ২৪ কোটি টাকা এবং বালুফাররায় থেকে ভাগীরথী ক্রোজার পর্যন্ত ১.৮ কিলোমিটার ভাঙন প্রতিরোধের জন্য কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ১৭ কোটি বরাদ্দ করে। কিন্তু কাজ শুরুর পরেই সিডিউল লঙ্ঘন এবং দুর্নীতির অভিযোগ ওঠে। কেন্দ্রীয় জল সম্পদ দফতর তিন সদস্যের তদন্ত কমিটি তৈরি করে।

কমিটির সদস্য প্রসাদ সেন বালুফাররায় গেলে এলাকার বাসিন্দারা অভিযোগের তালিকা নিয়ে হাজির হন তাঁর সামনে। প্রসাদবাবু বলেন, “স্পার জলতলের চেয়ে উঁচু এবং এর কাজ হল জলের গতি ভিন্ন পথে পরিচালিত করা। কিন্তু গত কয়েক বছর এই পদ্ধতিতে কাজ করে ভাঙন আটকানো যায়নি বলেই এ বার বেডবার তৈরির সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছিল। তার পরে কী করে নকশা না-মেনে কাজ হল বুঝতে পারছি না।”

After storm, looters strike

New Orleans, Aug. 31 (Reuters): Overwhelmed authorities struggled to evacuate survivors trapped in the rising floodwaters of New Orleans and to control looters who ran wild today amid the destruction left by Hurricane Katrina. Engineers tried to plug a leaking levee that was allowing lake water to pour into the city two days after the storm struck the US Gulf Coast.

People left stranded were running out of food and water and growing desperate as authorities tried to determine how to get them out and where to take them.



Two men on a floating door in New Orleans. (Reuters)

"We've sent buses in. We will be either loading them by boat, helicopter, anything that is necessary," Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco told ABC's *Good Morning America*. Texas governor Rick Perry said about 23,000 refugees stuck at the New Orleans Superdome arena will be given shelter in the Houston Astrodome. President George W. Bush's plane swooped low over three states today, giving him a sombre view of the destruction, as he cut short a vacation in Texas to return to Washington to oversee the US government's response.

Air Force One descended to less than 900 metres over Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to allow Bush to see some of the worst damage.

Katrina's death toll was more than 100 and expected to rise much higher, but efforts to count the dead took a back seat to assisting survivors. Rescue teams busy saving people left bodies floating in the high waters.

Looting erupted around the city as people broke into stores to grab supplies, television sets, jewellery, clothes and computers.

"It's a lot of chaos right now," Louisiana state police Director H.L. Whitehorn said.

Amid the looting, gun-toting citizens took to the streets in some areas to try to restore order in New Orleans. Where it was still dry, some store owners sat in front of their businesses, guns in hand. One had put up a sign reading: "You loot, I shoot."

Police said there were dozens of carjackings overnight, by desperate survivors trying to get out of town or obtain supplies.

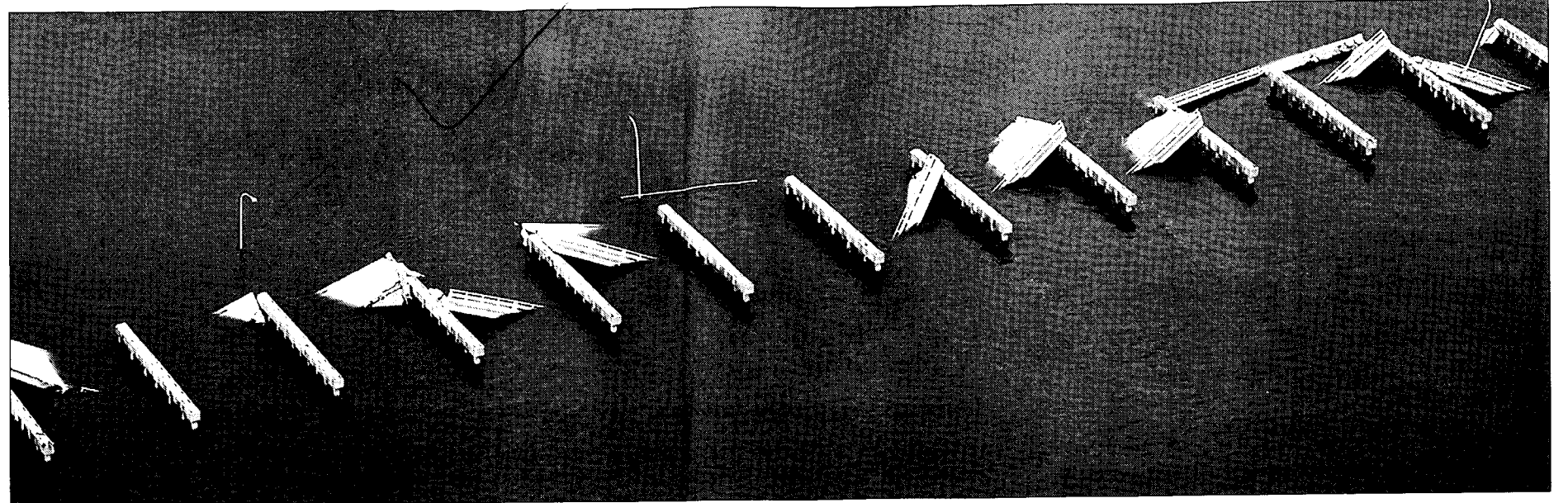
Somebody fired at a rescue helicopter Tuesday night, forcing its crew to abandon efforts to evacuate patients from a hospital, a state official said.

Authorities were so intent on rescuing flood victims that at first they let the looting go unstoppped.

At least 110 people died in Mississippi. "We're just estimating, but the number could go double or triple from what we're talking about now," a civil defence director said.

New Orleans at first appeared to have received a glancing blow from Katrina, but the raging waters of Lake Pontchartrain tore holes in the levees that protect the low-lying city, then slowly filled it up.

The historic French Quarter, the main draw for New Orleans' huge tourist industry, should escape with only minor flooding.



A section of the bridge connecting Ocean Springs with Biloxi, Mississippi, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. (Reuters)

Battles abroad tell on war against Katrina

ANN SCOTT TYSON

Washington, Aug. 31: With thousands of their citizen-soldiers away fighting in Iraq, states hit hard by Hurricane Katrina scrambled to muster forces for rescue and security missions — calling up army bands and water-purification teams, among other units, and requesting help from distant states and the active-duty military.

As the devastation threatened to overwhelm state resources, federal authorities called on the Pentagon to mobilise active-duty aircraft, ships and troops and set up an unprecedented task force to coordinate a wider military response, said officials from the Northern Command, which oversees homeland defence.

National Guard officials in the states acknowledged that the scale of the destruction is stretching the limits of available manpower while placing another extraordinary demand on their troops — most of whom have already served tours in Iraq or Afghanistan or in homeland defence missions since 2001.

More than 6,000 Guard members were mobilised in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida when the storm struck on Monday, with the number rising to 8,000 yesterday and hundreds more expected to be called to active duty, National Guard officials said yesterday.

"Missing the personnel is the big thing in this particular event. We need our people," said Lt Andy Thaggard, a spokesman for the Mississippi National Guard, which has a brigade of more than 4,000 troops in central Iraq.



Looters make off with merchandise from several stores in New Orleans. (AP)

Louisiana also has about 3,000 Guard troops in Baghdad.

Mississippi has about 40 per cent of its guard force deployed or preparing to deploy and has called up all remaining Guard units for hurricane relief, Thaggard said.

Those include the army band based in Jackson, Mississippi. "They are mustering transportation to move them south," he said. Soldiers who have lost their homes are exempt, he said.

Mississippi has requested troops and aircraft from about eight other states — including military police and engineers from Alabama, helicopters and crews from Arkansas and Georgia, and aircraft-maintenance experts from Connecticut, who are filling in for a Mississippi maintenance unit that is heading to West Asia.

"This is the biggest disaster we've ever had, so we're going to need more aircraft than we've got," said Colonel Bradley MacNealy, the

Mississippi Army National Guard's aviation officer.

Mississippi has had to borrow from Arkansas UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters fitted with hoists, using them together with the Coast Guard to pluck to safety several dozen people stranded by floodwaters, he said.

Chinook helicopters from Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi are flying the equivalent of 18 large truckloads of critical supplies — including ice, water, food and chain saws for road-clearing crews — to Mississippi's coast, he said.

In Alabama, all the major Guard units activated for the disaster have already served in Iraq, and some still have contingents there, said Alabama Guard spokesman Norman Arnold.

Capt. Richard Locke of the Guard's 1st Battalion 167th Infantry headed toward Mobile Tuesday with a force of 400 soldiers cobbled together from four units because the rest of the battalion is in Iraq.

Carrying M-16 rifles and 9mm pistols, the soldiers are assigned to control traffic at unlighted intersections, and patrol in Humvees and on foot to prevent looting.

Recruiting and retention problems are worsening the strain on Guard forces in hurricane-ravaged states.

Alabama's Army National Guard has a strength of 11,000 troops — or 78 per cent of the authorised number.

"We're just losing too many out the back door," Arnold said.

LOS ANGELES TIMES- WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

BATTERED NEW ORLEANS ESCAPES KNOCKOUT PUNCH

Fears Of Eco-Disaster Subside, Eye Of Storm Passes East Of City

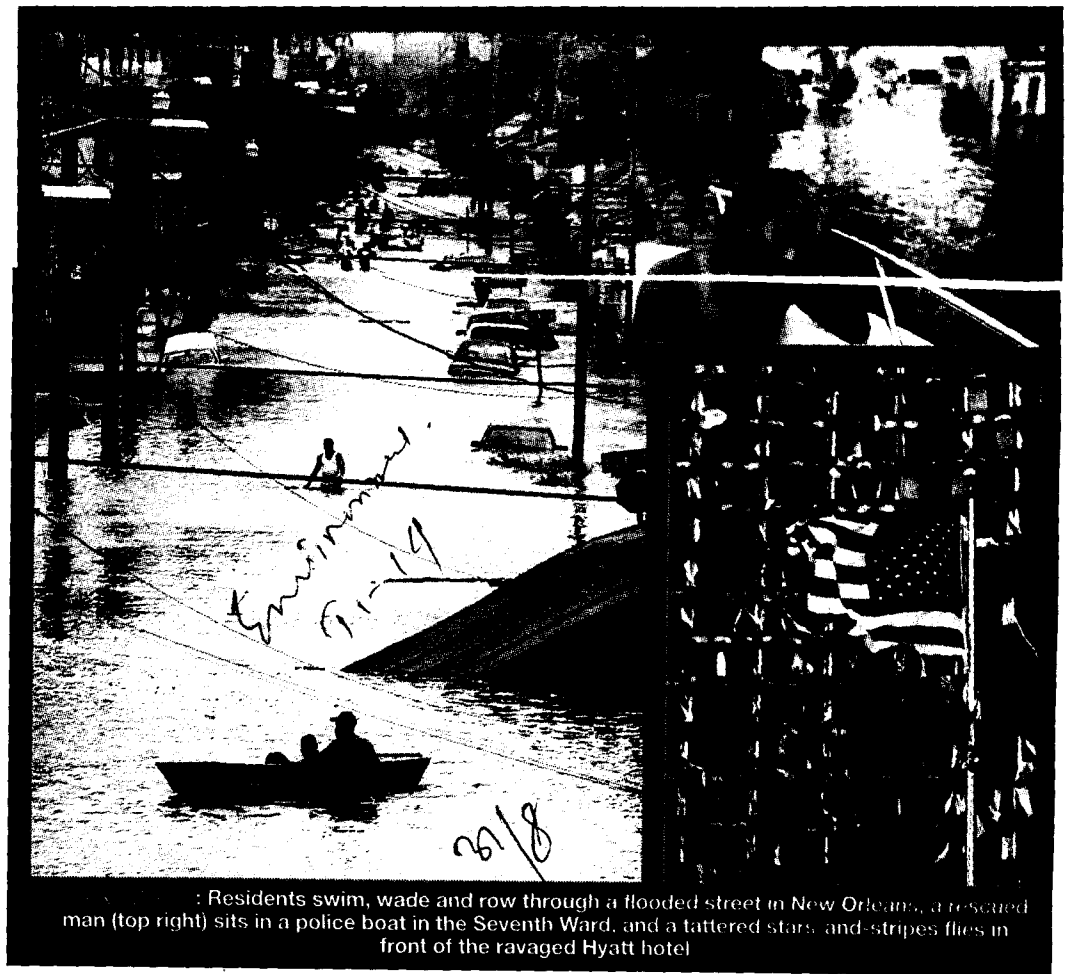
New Orleans: The oak tree crashed through the ceiling of Terry Milton's bedroom before dawn. When he opened the front door of his old brick house, a waist-high wall of water nearly knocked him down. He yelled to his fiancée, best friend and six relatives to get out of the house, then roused his sister and three others next door.

With tree limbs whipping them and floodwaters surging over eastern New Orleans, the women and children clambered into a boat a neighbour had left behind. Milton and the men clung to the side. As they rounded a corner, crying for help, three people on a second-floor balcony being lapped by water pulled them to relative safety.

The hurricane was just starting and through most of Monday the floodwaters rose and fell. "I thought I was going to lose my life," Milton said.

By late afternoon, police and rescuers began venturing out to look for stranded victims of Hurricane Katrina. The worst damage in the city was thought to be in Milton's neighbourhood, a mostly poor area known as the Lower Ninth Ward. Downtown New Orleans and the French Quarter appeared to have been spared as the eye of the powerful storm passed just east of the city. Dire predictions of 20-foot-deep toxic rivers running in the streets and huge buildings coming apart did not materialise.

Instead, most of the city was left fairly in disarray, with trees and branches and power lines



Residents swim, wade and row through a flooded street in New Orleans, a rescued man (top right) sits in a police boat in the Seventh Ward, and a tattered stars-and-stripes flies in front of the ravaged Hyatt hotel

down, canvas awnings and store signs lost, and some streets under a foot or two of water. A huge chunk of the white rubbery fabric that covers the Superdome was torn away and

thousands of people who had taken shelter there were soaked, but none hurt, authorities said.

Hundreds of windows were blown out in some of the big hotels, office buildings and condo-

miniums, and cars parked on the streets damaged. The French Quarter was a mess of torn tree limbs and shrubs, and a smattering of broken roofs and masonry. NYT News Service

Interlinking rivers: is it the solution?

V. Rajamani

ONE OF the major outcomes of 'development' is water-scarcity. This in spite of the fact that the Indian sub-continent receives much higher annual rainfall compared with other major continental areas. No doubt, this rainfall is very unevenly distributed geographically and in terms of time, just as any other gift of nature. One of the proclaimed aims of the proposed project on interlinking of Indian rivers is to remove this natural imbalance, which has also been cause of undesirable flooding in some regions and drought in others. Other objectives are to increase foodgrain production for the growing population, hydro-power production, and inland navigation. Projects of this nature for the 'common good' of all people are of utmost importance and need a thorough scientific study using some of the basic ideas of earth system sciences.

A river flows on land in response to tectonic features and climate of the region. The ecology of the land and coastal areas also exists in response to these basic earth processes.

Rivers in India, especially those flowing in the peninsula, are geologically several tens of million years old. They are mostly rain-fed, with some contribution from glacial melting to the Himalayan rivers. Therefore, these rivers have survived through major climatic changes, monsoon variations, sea level changes, and tectonic activities. Most of them have built extensive flood plains and deltas. These alluvial plains and deltas are historically the main farmlands in India. These rivers store the excess water in the floodplains and deltas during monsoons and release it during dry periods to maintain the minimum flow and to sustain agriculture. The geological, physiographic, and climatic set-up in India allows agriculture in low lying and groundwater-bearing floodplains and deltas, and forestry in upland, river catchment areas. This was the practice in India till large dams began to be built in upland areas.

Interlinking of rivers requires construction of a large number of huge dams. In addition to

The long-term ecological consequences of interlinking rivers should be evaluated before any such project is taken up in India.

several ecological and social consequences, this causes a near total removal of suspended sediment load from the stream flow, which would otherwise get deposited on land through flooding. Part of the dissolved solute load (bio-available nutrients) also gets removed along with settling silt — clay-sized (less than 60 micrometres) sediments — from water flowing downstream of the dams (in river channels and irrigation canals). Consequently, irrigation water becomes nutrient depleted and this necessitates the extensive use of chemical fertilizers for agriculture. Consequences of water pollution (both surface and subsurface) due to the use of inorganic fertilizers and pesticides and of nutrient-depleted food on the health of the ecosystem including that of humans are somewhat known. Besides, unlike a natural river channel (bed), a canal cannot provide for ecological niches for diversity of aquatic life.

Whenever water goes through any living body, the chemistry of its dissolved solute changes. The entire ecosystem along a river and at its mouth has evolved in response to the natural and dynamic changes in the chemistry of flowing water as well as small-scale physiographic changes along the river and its adjacent region. Changes in the water chemistry due to damming, required for interlinking, will affect the ecosystem, perhaps adversely. This needs to be studied and understood. Further, construction of dams has other major consequences, especially for the downstream side of rivers from where 'excess' water is to be transferred.

We must realise that river flooding created fertile plains, by depositing nutrient-rich sediments, which had acquired the textures and mineralogy to hold enormous quantities of water and nutrients. River flooding is a construc-

tive geological process and not a disaster as it is considered to be by the urbanised civilisation. Annual flooding removes the agricultural wastes/toxins, deposits nutrient-rich sediments, recharges the groundwater in the farmland, and sustains various riparian habitats. Low frequency and high magnitude flooding makes new cultivable farmland, in addition to all of the above. River flooding, in lowland areas particularly, is good for agriculture and ecology. If all human civilisation and development are due to sustainability of agriculture then there is no earth process that is more beneficial to mankind than natural river flooding. Flooding becomes a hazard from the human perspective when the floodplains are taken over for human habitation.

Dams in the upstream part of a river not only deprive the downstream region of its natural supply of sediments but also increases the hydraulic gradient locally. Both these factors increase the erosive power of water leading to bank erosion provided water is allowed to flow downstream. Curtailing floods in the lower reaches amounts to virtual stoppage of natural recharging of groundwater in the cultivated floodplains and deltas. These areas in peninsular India receive much lower rainfall during the southwest rainfall for direct recharging of groundwater. At the same time, the very same deltaic region has already been subjected to overexploitation of groundwater to maintain agricultural productivity.

The cumulative effect of all these on the landscape in terms of its vegetative cover and its potential for desertification needs to be evaluated. In regions of semi aridity with high inter-annual variability of rainfall, intense cultivation, without regard to groundwater recharge potential, could lead to desertification. Absence of

periodic river flooding in such regions would only accelerate this process of desertification.

Along the east coast of India, all major peninsular rivers had built extensive deltas on a geological timescale and, therefore, made intensive agriculture possible for the past several millennia. Delta building activities continue even today. This clearly implies that in all cases, river action in terms of sediment transport is far more dominant than the combined action of waves, tides, and littoral currents. Damming the rivers for linking will cut down the sediment supply and this could cause coastal and delta erosion by waves and the prevailing, south-moving, littoral longshore currents.

On a geological timescale, if not on a century or a decadal scale, this will result in a loss of productive farmland as well as in small-scale sea transgressions. If the much debated discussion on global warming and consequent sea level rise has any relevance to the east coast, the cumulative effect of coastal erosion due to reduction of sediment supply and the sea level rise could lead to large scale sea transgressions into the developed coastal areas.

There is a strong symbiosis between marine and land life systems on earth. The hydrologic cycle provides fresh water to the land from the oceans. Water, fallen on land either as rainfall or snowfall, weathers rocks on land and picks up the nutrient elements as dissolved solutes, and carries them through surface run-off (rivers) as well as subsurface flows to the sea. Thus the land life gets water from the oceans and the marine life gets some essential nutrients from land.

Effect on Bay of Bengal

If only little water is returned to the oceans because of interlinking of rivers, there are at least two major consequences. (1) Marine life is deprived of nutrient supply (although wind can transport mineral dust from land, which contain nutrients but not readily in bioavailable form) and marine productivity could get adversely affected. (2) The Bay of Bengal (BoB) is uniquely characterised by the presence of a less-dense and low-saline layer of water. The presence of this low-salinity layer helps in the maintenance of high sea-surface temperatures (greater than 28 degrees C), a requirement thought to be responsible for the intensification of summer monsoon in the BoB. It is also well known that a very large part of the Indian subcontinent gets summer monsoon rainfall because of the development and maintenance of a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal.

It appears as though the BoB gets back more water from land than it gives by evaporation to maintain the low-density layer. If so, what will be the effect on the monsoon system of the river-linking project? Or, how much minimum water should be returned to the BoB from land to maintain the low salinity layer and therefore the monsoon system? How much land water is likely to be returned to the BoB annually after the completion of all linkages? We simply do not know. If the monsoon system from the BoB slowly shuts itself off on a decadal or a century scale in the event of land-water not reaching the sea, then rivers on the Indian continent may not exist to sustain their linkages. This is very serious. We need to generate sound and credible scientific data on the monsoon system taking into account all possible air-sea-land-life interactions.

A very thorough scientific study on all aspects discussed above including consequences of flood mitigation, lack of sediment, water and nutrient supply in the downstream and coastal region, and more importantly in the BoB, is essential for evaluating the long-term consequences of interlinking of rivers in India. At present most of these aspects are huge unknowns. Elementary wisdom tells us that when in doubt leave things as they are. Alternatively, we can take advantage of the knowledge available in this ever-flattening world.

(The writer is Professor of Geology at the School of Environmental Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

CARTOONSCAPE



Surendra

Ken-Betwa link, the litmus test

In a small first step in the grandiose project of linking up India's rivers, the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, along with the Union Water Resources Minister, have signed a memorandum of understanding to link the Ken and Betwa rivers. Initially, the Centre will prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on the link and on what it would mean for the two States. There is as yet no agreement on the actual sharing of water or costs, nor on the more serious issues of relocation and resettlement. Significantly, both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his predecessor in office, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, have given their distinctive reactions to the MoU. Dr. Singh cautioned the States to look seriously at all the "social and environmental aspects" of any project before going ahead with major schemes for inter-linking of rivers. Mr. Vajpayee hailed it as "bold and historic initiative, set to change the water management paradigm in the country." The contrasting responses denote the two sides to the coin. For Mr. Vajpayee, it is the first step in the realisation of his Government's initiative in inter-linking of rivers across the country. Prime Minister Singh, while taking the project forward, sounded the right note of caution. Under the Rs.4,263 crore Ken-Betwa link project, a dam and a 231-km link canal are to be constructed in eight years.

Equally significant is the fact that the two Chief Ministers — Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav and the Bharatiya Janata Party's Babulal Gaur — belong to parties that are at odds with each other while a Congress-led coalition rules at the Centre. Viewed from a political perspective, the Ken-Betwa project offers a low-risk experiment for the controversial river-linking programme. But what needs attention is the fact that 8,650 hectares, including 6,400 hectares of forest area, will be submerged, and about 8,550 people in 10 villages will be displaced by the project. Uttar Pradesh has expressed its fears about the possible loss of water and power and sought compensation from Madhya Pradesh. When it comes to water and cost sharing, there are bound to be contentious issues. Clearly the most critical issue relates to relocation and resettlement of the displaced families. Unless this sensitive aspect of the project is carefully handled and just resettlement plans are drawn up and implemented in consultation with the affected people, such a project cannot be allowed to go through (the merits of other considerations aside). With more than 30 such river-linking projects across the country on the drawing board, the Ken-Betwa link provides a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate that governments and implementing agencies can deliver on what they promise and the resettlement part of the project can be executed to the satisfaction of the displaced. A cost-benefit ratio will then have to justify the magnitude of investments required for such projects.

Katrina slams Florida: 7 dead

ASSOCIATED Press
Miami, August 27

RESIDENTS OF the Florida Panhandle nervously monitored the path of Hurricane Katrina early on Saturday as weary South Florida homeowners swept the muddy residue of floodwaters from their basements and street crews canoed through miles of inundated roadways.

Katrina intensified into a Category 3 storm with 115 mph wind on Saturday and appeared to turn toward the Louisiana-Mississippi coastline. Forecasters said it will likely gain strength over the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

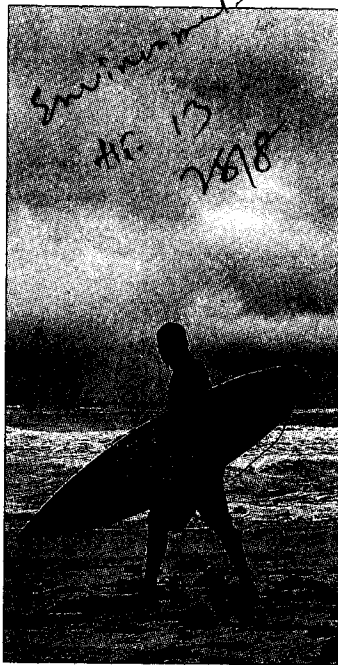
But forecasters were uncertain of exactly where it might strike, saying the storm churning in the Gulf of Mexico could make landfall anywhere from the Panhandle to Louisiana by Monday, possibly as a Category 4 storm with 130 mph winds.

Utility crews scrambled to restore power to more than one million customers on Friday as Hurricane Katrina, blamed for seven deaths and miles of flooded streets in South Florida, threatened the state with an encore visit.

"I'm so sick of this," said Pat Jackson, an interior decorator in Homestead. Her apartment building was flooded with several inches of water during Katrina's first pass across the state. "It seems like every other week or month another one comes," she said.

Scenes of Katrina's impact were everywhere on Friday — work crews sawing trees crippled by the winds; people canoeing through inundated streets; a 727 cargo plane pushed along a runway fence; sailboats resting askew on a sandy shore.

Florida has been hit by six hurricanes since last August,



REUTERS

A surfer walks along the beach as high surf and thunderstorms roll in.

and the Panhandle was slammed by Hurricane Ivan last year, and then again by Hurricane Dennis this year, both Category 3 storms. Katrina was a Category 1 with 80 mph winds when it hit Florida on Thursday.

On Friday, Gov. Jeb Bush urged residents in many of the same Panhandle areas to monitor the storm and make necessary preparations. If Katrina hit at Category 4 strength, as forecasters say it could, it would mean sustained winds topping 130 mph.

Bush said he had asked for federal disaster assistance for Miami-Dade and Broward counties, where some residents said they were caught off guard by the gathering storm. The governor said he expected a response on Saturday.

28 AUG 2005

Global warming behind fires and floods in Europe

Development Has Blunted Nature's Ability To Contain Deluge

Vienna: Fire and floods have engulfed Europe this summer, as a relentless drought in Spain and Portugal transformed swaths of woodland into a massive tinderbox and torrential rains carved a trail of destruction through alpine valleys and Balkan villages.

Entire sections of the Swiss capital Bern have been submerged, blazes flare up even as old ones are snuffed out, and dozens have been killed in a third straight summer of extreme European weather that has people asking: Why?

Salvano Briceno, the head of the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, warned that Europe should expect more severe rains because of global warming and called for efficient early warning systems. "It is incredible that people in a country like Switzerland are dying because of floods. But people forget easily how vulnerable they are. We should always be ready to face natural hazards," Briceno said.

But Dale Mohler, the director of international forecasting, said neither the fires nor flooding this summer are all that uncommon. "People wonder, hey, what's going on with our climate,"



Residents stand in a street covered with debris following floods in the central Swiss town of Kien after days of torrential rain caused rivers and lakes to burst their banks

said Mohler.

"Is the world coming to an end? No—at least not today or tomorrow," he said. Some even suggest that there is merely a false perception of an increase in such disasters as a result of the heightened ability of the media to beam images of destruction instantly all over the world.

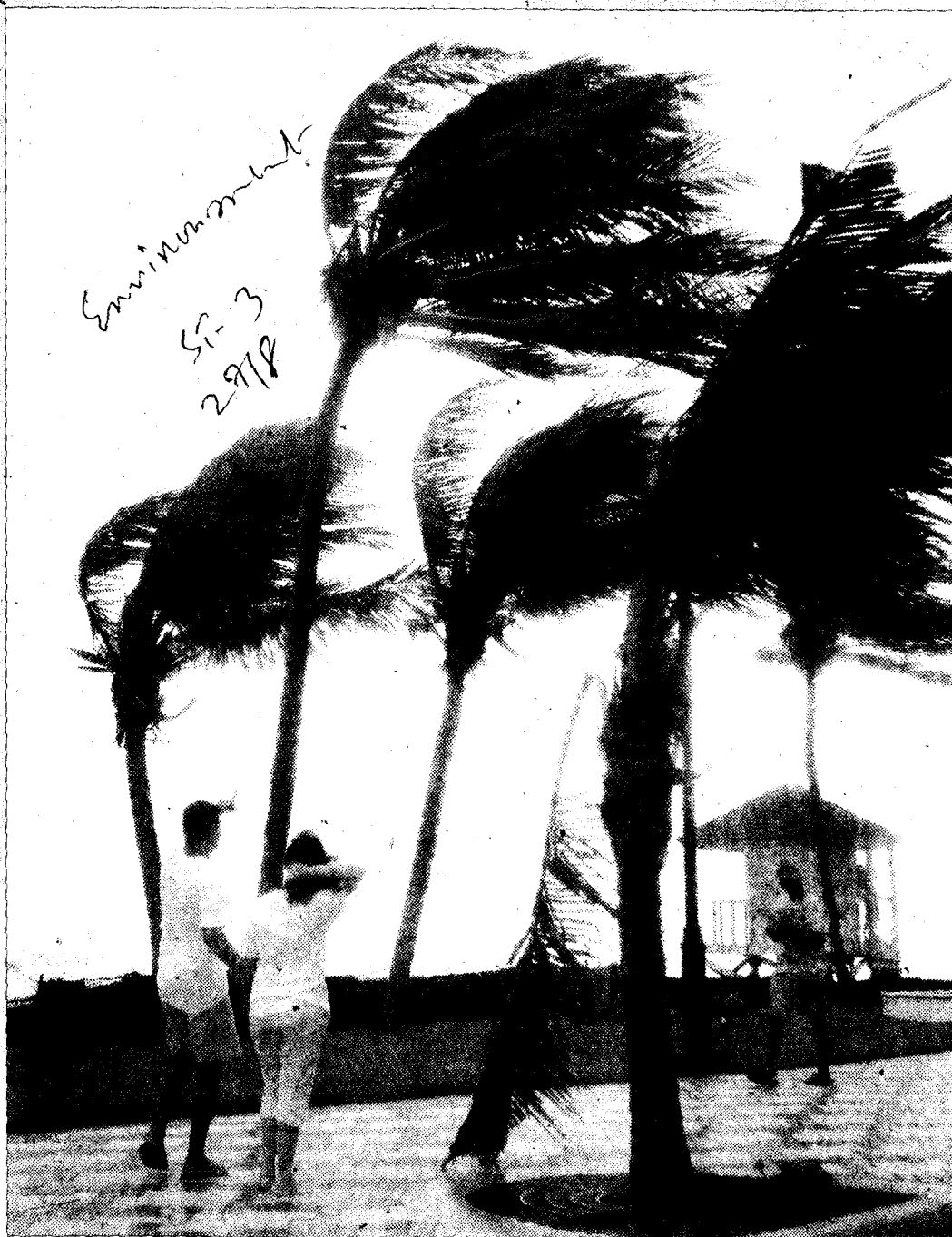
Still, Mohler said the disasters do not compare either in rarity or scope to phenomena such as the record-breaking heat in France in 2003 that killed nearly 15,000 people.

But environmental groups like the

World Wildlife Fund argue that global warming has intensified the impact of the weather events. Martin Hiller, a spokesman for the group, said that while it was difficult for anyone to connect one specific disaster to climate change, the increasing number of them and their intensity suggest they are connected to global warming. "We are linking these (extreme weather) events to climate change," he said. "It is not the only reason. There are also other things happening—building up the land, bad land use plans, bad fire prevention in the south, for instance in Portugal—but all the factors together are more and more exacerbated by global warming."

In Switzerland, one factor that has contributed to flooding is overdevelopment, which has intensified in recent years as more people have moved to the suburbs or built second homes in the countryside, Anton Schleiss of Lausanne's polytechnic school told Switzerland's Radio DRS. Development has blunted nature's ability to contain flooding, such as allowing rivers to flow more naturally and thereby enable them to better absorb high water levels, Schleiss said. Agenciase

Hurricane Katrina hits Florida



People walk along the coast buffeted by 50 mph winds in advance of Hurricane Katrina on Thursday on Deerfield Beach, Florida. — AFP

FORT LAUDERDALE (USA), Aug. 26. — Hurricane Katrina felled trees, peeled off roofs and left more than 1.3 million consumers without power as it slammed into Florida's densely populated southeastern coast with driving rains and sustained winds of 130 kph. Four people were killed, three by falling trees.

Rain fell in horizontal sheets, seas were estimated at 4.5 meters and wind gusted to 148 kph, toppling trees and street signs. Florida Power & Light said the vast majority of people without electricity were in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. Weather officials said

flooding was the main concern as the storm dropped up to 38 centimetres in parts of Miami-Dade County. Early today, Katrina had weakened into a tropical storm.

The storm proved fatal for three people who ignored warnings to stay inside until the worst was over.

A man in his 20s in Fort Lauderdale was crushed by a falling tree as he sat alone in his car, while a 54-year-old man was killed by a falling tree in the Fort Lauderdale suburb of Plantation. A woman who was struck by a tree died at a hospital in Hollywood, hospital officials said. — AP

Sr 5
26/8

Ken meets Betwa in heartland

Statement/News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. — In a significant move, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh today signed the country's first ever river interlinking MoU for connecting Ken and Betwa rivers with the avowed objective to enhance irrigation and water supply in the two states.

The pact is considered to be a major step towards the proposed project - colossal and controversial - of interlinking major rivers in the country.

Today's tripartite agreement which cleared the decks for preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) by the Centre, was signed by the UP chief minister Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, the MP chief minister, Mr Babulal Gaur, and the Union water resources development minister, Mr PR Das Munshi, in the presence of the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh.

The project estimated to cost over Rs 4,000 crore, envisages diversion of surplus waters in the Ken river basin to the water-

deficit Betwa basin through construction of Daudhan dam on Ken river as well as a 231-km long link canal.

Describing the signing of the agreement as a "historic step" for the benefit of the people in the two states, Mr Yadav said it would prove to be a "model" for other states in the resolution of their river disputes.

Mr Gaur said the MoU fulfilled the dream of the former Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, for interlinking the country's rivers. It's said that once the surplus waters of the Ken basin are transferred to Betwa, it would enhance irrigation and water supply in Chhatrapur, Tikamgarh, Panna, Raisen and Vidisha districts of MP and Hamirpur, Banda and Jhansi districts of UP.

Mr Das Munshi said certain reservations of the UP government regarding the feasibility report of Ken-Betwa link project as prepared by the National Water Development Authority (NWDA) "will definitely be addressed at the DPR stage".

The Ken-Betwa river interlinking project will be the country's first of the 16 river water transfer link projects identified by the Centre under Peninsular Rivers Development, which is supposed to check recurring floods and droughts.

Ken river has 87 percent of catchment area in MP and its surplus water would be diverted to Betwa river. This is one of the 30 identified projects as part of the Rs 5,60,000 crore country-wide interlinking of rivers.

The scheme would provide for a water grid for MP and UP interlinking canal backed by as many storages as possible. The project is aimed at development of water resource, irrigation, flood control, hydro-power generation, drinking water and fisheries.

UP had certain reservations regarding the feasibility report of Ken-Betwa link project as prepared by the NWDA. Following the signing of MOU and the completion of the DPR, funding agreements and the execution of the project will get underway. Mr Das Munshi said

PM assurance on project

NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. — The Prime Minister today assured Rajya Sabha that his government was working on the interlinking of rivers while going into various issues, including environmental implications of this mega project. "We have to go into all these issues before proceeding on it," Dr Singh said, intervening during the question hour. He said detailed project reports (DPRs) of several riverlinks were being prepared. This work is going on, the Prime Minister assured while clarify-

ing, "It would be wrong on my part to say early results will be seen." "Before coming to this House, I was witness to the signing of a feasibility project of Ken-Betwa. The first project DPR is being prepared," he informed the House.

The chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh had in the morning signed in the presence of the PM, an MoU linking the Ken and Betwa rivers to enhance irrigation and water supply in the two states. — SNS

that issues concerning environment, relief and rehabilitation and concerns of the lower riparian areas of Jhansi areas will be addressed. The water resources ministry had prepared a national perspective plan (NPP) in 1980 for augmentation of water bodies in the country. The NWDA has identified altogether 30 river links - 16 under the peninsular project and 14 under the

Himalayan project - for preparation of feasibility reports in line with the proposals of the NPP. The NWDA has so far completed feasibility reports for 14 links under the peninsular component. These link projects are to be taken up with the states concerned to evolve a "consensus" for starting the next step - the preparation of detailed project reports.

Accord on Ken-Betwa river link

Vajpayee hails the agreement; praises Manmohan Singh, UPA Government



HISTORIC INITIATIVE: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, flanked by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav (left) and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Ken-Betwa River Link Project, in New Delhi on Thursday. - PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday asked the States to take into account all social and environmental aspects before implementing any river linking projects.

Dr. Singh was speaking on the occasion of signing of an agreement between the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Governments for preparing a 'Detailed Project Report' (DPR) on the linking of the Ken and Betwa rivers.

Under the Rs. 4,263-crore project, surplus water of the Ken will be transferred to the Betwa basin in U.P.

A dam and a 231 km-long link canal will be constructed in

eight years. This is the first of the 30 link projects proposed at an estimated cost of Rs. 5,60,000 crores.

Under the project, about five dams will be built and about 8,650 hectares, including 6,400 hectares of forest area, will be submerged. The link canal will pass through the Panna National Park in M.P. and about 8,550 people of 10 villages will be displaced.

The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, hailed the agreement as a "bold and historic initiative, set to change the water management paradigm in the country." He praised Dr. Singh and the UPA Government for facilitating the agreement and expressed the hope that the

Centre would motivate other States to link major rivers.

The memorandum of agreement (MoU) was signed by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur and Union Water Resources Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi.

Mr. Dasmunsi said the Centre would bear the entire cost for preparing the DPR, estimated at Rs. 30 crores. A sum of Rs. 6 crores had been set aside in this budget; and for the rest, the Ministry would raise a demand in the supplementary demand for grants. "The DPR would take into consideration issues of environment, rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced

populations, riparian zones and other concerns of the States."

UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi did not attend the function.

As per the MoU, the Centre would decide on the necessary organisational framework to complete the DPR and implement the project.

The MoU calls for specific agreements, based on the DPR, between the two States on the scope of the link, the sharing of costs and benefits and an arrangement for management and control of water.

Although Mr. Yadav hailed the MoU as "historic," he referred to Uttar Pradesh's fears that the reduced availability of water at the Paricha weir could affect irrigation in Jhansi, Ja-

laun and Hamirpur. He also sought compensation from M.P. for any of loss of power at downstream Rajghat and Matatila dams due to low availability of water.

Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh and Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Minister Munna Singh and Anuradha Choudhary, accompanied Mr. Yadav.

Mr. Gaur said inter-linking of rivers was a "dream" of Mr. Vajpayee. "The link would help farmers and the poor in the State," he pointed out. He would try to persuade his Rajasthan counterpart, Vasundhara Raje, for the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal link between the two States.

26 AUG 2005

THE HINDU

First step towards linking rivers this week

The ceremony will be held in the presence of Prime Minister in Parliament House

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: The first step towards implementation of the much talked about Inter-Linking of Rivers programme will be taken here this coming Thursday with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Ken-Betwa river link being signed by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babulal Gaur and Uttar Pradesh Chief Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The ceremony will be held in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Parliament House and United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi is also likely to attend.

The two States have not really sorted out technical differences on the allocation of river waters but have agreed to preparation

• Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh have agreed to preparation of the Detailed Project Report

• About 1,020 million cubic metres "surplus" waters of the Ken to be diverted

of the Detailed Project Report (DPR). According to highly placed Ministry sources, the technical glitches would be sorted out at the DPR stage. The preparation of the DPR would take three to four years.

The multi-purpose link was identified by the National Democratic Alliance Government for implementation as an "example" to give a push to the river linking programme which envisages construction of 30 links at an estimated cost of Rs. 5,60,000

crores.

Ken is an inter-state river with 87 per cent catchment area in Madhya Pradesh.

Betwa, also an inter-state river, rises in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh and flows across Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh with a 31 per cent flow in U.P.

The project, at an estimated cost of Rs. 1988.74 crores (at 1994-95 level), envisages diversion of about 1,020 million cubic metres "surplus" waters of the

Ken to the water-deficit Betwa basin for integrated development of the lower zone of the Ken valley and the upper reaches of the Betwa.

About 2,135 hectares of land in Madhya Pradesh and 180 hectares in Uttar Pradesh would be acquired for the link canal. While a dam is proposed on the Ken at Daudhan, 2.5 km upstream of the existing Ganga weir, to divert water, six more dams would be built.

The construction work for the link project is planned for nine years including the pre-construction year.

An estimated 900 villages and over 9,000 hectares of land would be submerged entirely in the Chhatarpur and Panna districts in Madhya Pradesh.

23 NOV 2005

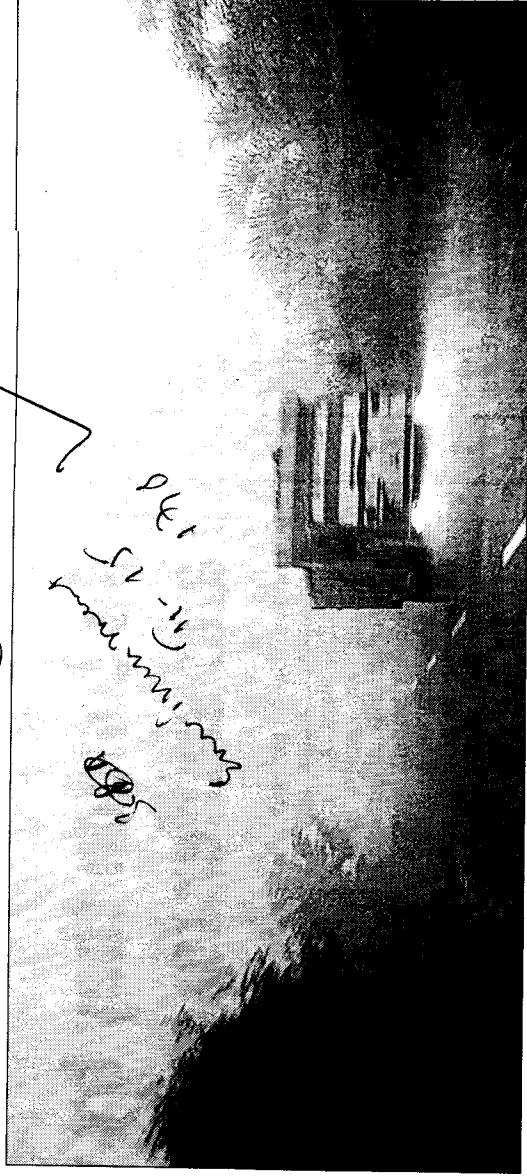
THE HILL CU

Asian haze crisis gets murkier

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia): Indonesia is free to prosecute Malaysian-owned plantations responsible for setting forest-clearing fires on Sumatra island, creating a major air pollution crisis, the foreign minister said on Tuesday, while calling for a regional action plan to deal with such disasters.

Indonesia on Monday named 10 plantation companies—eight of them Malaysian—it wants to hold legally responsible for setting fires to clear land. The practice is illegal, but authorities have rarely enforced the anti-burning laws. Large parts of Malaysia, including its main city Kuala Lumpur, were covered with the choking smoke for 10 days this month, fouling the air to such hazardous levels that public health was threatened in the country's worst ecological crisis in years. The haze dissipated with changing winds and rains over the weekend.

Foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters that the Malaysian government will not interfere or protest if Indonesia prosecutes the Malaysian companies op-



erating on Sumatra that were identified as having contributed to the problem. "If any Malaysian companies flout laws of the country they operate in, action should be taken. We will not interfere," he said.

The comment put to rest fears of another diplomatic spat between

the two countries, who have often exchanged words over territorial rights, illegal Indonesian migrants in Malaysia and other problems.

"This agreement must be translated into an action plan and have a mechanism that can be operationalised when such situations oc-

cur," he said. "Agreement is one part, implementation is another."

The upcoming summit of ASEAN leaders in December in Kuala Lumpur will discuss setting up an action plan because it needs political will and co-mmitment, Hamid said. Agencies

Haze in Malaysia reaches crisis levels

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug. 10. — Schools closed, flights were canceled and people stayed indoors as a noxious haze blamed on forest fires in Malaysia thickened today to dangerous levels over Kuala Lumpur and surrounding towns.

Environment minister Mr Adenan Satem said the haze, which appeared suddenly last week and has hung as a persistent brown cloud, is concentrated over the Klang Valley. The valley includes Malaysia's main city Kuala Lumpur, the administrative capital Putrajaya and a sprawling residential neighbourhood, Petaling Jaya.

"The situation is not getting better. It is getting worse," Mr Adenan told a news conference. He said he will go to Jakarta immediately for talks with his counterparts to find a solution.

"Flights at the Subang airport near Kuala Lumpur, used primarily by charter and private aircrafts, were suspended after visibility plunged to less than 400 meters (1,300 feet)," said Mr Daud Hosnan, senior operations manager for Malaysia Airports.

Visibility at Kuala Lumpur International Airport was 1 km (half a mile) but no flights were affected, Mr Daud said. In downtown Kuala Lumpur, where the smoke even filtered into air-conditioned offices, nothing could be seen beyond 500 meters (yards).

An environment ministry statement said air quality in 3 places including Kuala Lumpur suburb Shah Alam had become "hazardous." Putrajaya and Petaling Jaya were categorized as "very unhealthy" while five areas were shrouded in "unhealthy" air.

Hospitals reported a spurt in respiratory and eye ailments from the dust and smoke-laden white haze, causing red eyes, runny noses, wheezing coughs and sore throats.

Health minister Mr Chua Soi Lek urged people to drink more water, cut down outdoor activities, wear protective masks and to refrain from smoking.

Resolving disputes over water sharing

What the river water disputes tribunals and the upper riparian States could not do, the monsoon has done.

V. Jayanth

BOTH ANDHRA Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have never had it so good. The reservoirs feeding the Krishna and the Cauvery delta basins are fast filling up. This is not because the upper riparian State, Karnataka, has obliged them, but because its dams cannot impound the inflows coming in from the heaviest monsoon activity in recent years. With Maharashtra opening all its dams and rain pounding the Western Ghats heavily over the past 10 days, Karnataka has no option except to open its sluices and issue flood alerts to the habitations along the Cauvery.

The inflows into the Krishna from Maharashtra via Karnataka have crossed five lakh cusecs. The Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to open its dams by August 6 to let waters into all the irrigation canals in the delta and surrounding areas. Srisailem is already full and the Nagarjunasagar dam will also surplus soon. The waters will flow into Somasila through the network of irrigation canals, raising Chennaites' hopes of substantial inflows in the Telugu Ganga canal to meet the city's drinking water requirements.

While the crisis that has hit Mumbai and western Maharashtra has cast a shadow and crippled life in the country's commercial capital, the extravagant monsoon, caused by a vortex, has demonstrated the potential of inter-linking rivers. Although Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu depend more on the Northeast monsoon, they have gained substantially from the bounty of the South West monsoon.

It is not just the Maharashtra-Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu link that has gained from the rain. It has been a similar development on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. The Mullaiperiyar has also got a surplus as a result of which the southern districts of Tamil Nadu will have more than enough water for both irrigation and drinking for the rest of the year. On the western border, Coimbatore and the Siruvani have received more than copious inflows. The Amravathi dam has also been opened. The suffering of Mumbai and its surroundings on one side and the sheer beauty of the major dams of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu letting out water in all its majesty provide a dramatic and poignant contrast, highlighting what the sharing of river waters means to States.

For four years, both Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have been crying hoarse for water, appealing to Karnataka to release at least a portion of what they say is legitimately due to them as lower riparian States — but to no avail. Their appeals to the Government of India also proved futile. Tribunal awards were of little avail in this context as Karnataka and its political leaders maintained that the State had little water for its people and could not afford to release any under the circumstances.

Faced with repeated representations from Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and under pressure from UPA constituents in Tamil Nadu, the Central Government dispatched a team of officials to look at the various reservoirs and assess the situation. By the time the Central team submitted its report to New Delhi, Mettur was receiving close to one lakh cusecs of inflow and the dam level has crossed the 100 feet level (against a maximum of 120 feet). The Krishna delta in Andhra Pradesh and the Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu can be assured of a bountiful crop if the Northeast monsoon does not misbehave in any way later in the year.

What the Centre or the tribunals could not solve, Nature in its bounty has done for these two lower riparian States. However, irrigation authorities contend that this should not lead to complacency and an end to the dialogue that has begun. A senior Tamil Nadu irrigation official cautions: "Just because this season's problem has been solved does not mean the inter-State river waters sharing arrangements are resolved. It is the Centre's duty to ensure that when there is a surplus and the climate is congenial to discussions between the rival States, a distress-sharing formula must be hammered out.

"It is in the interest of all concerned to evolve that formula in 2005 so that farmers can be sure of their crop in 2006. Just as industry wants a stable investment and taxation climate, farmers have a right to expect an assured crop and enough water for it. Everybody must understand and accept this. It is now the most favourable environment for a dialogue to clinch a distress sharing formula."

The key question for the southern region is: will the Central and Karnataka governments respond to this situation and utilise a 'surplus year' to narrow the gap on the outstanding issues in a conciliatory way?

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Government

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Freeze growth, say environmental groups

21/8 HD-VJ Environment

"Don't play the fool with nature because nature will never forgive you; something basically wrong"

Special Correspondent

MUMBAI: Environmental groups here have called upon Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh to put a freeze on the growth of Mumbai immediately until a proper study of the carrying capacity of the city is done.

This is part of the demands they have made in the wake of the problems thrown up by last week's rain disaster.

Study needed

Speaking on the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) premises, B.G. Deshmukh, former Union Cabinet Secretary,

who is also the president of the BNHS, said the environmental aspects of the flooding on July 26 needed to be studied.

"We need to tell the government: don't [play the] fool with nature because nature will never forgive you or forget. If the Government does not heed this, we will face the same crisis again."

Mr. Deshmukh said Mumbai was used to heavy rain and there was no reason why water logging should continue for two or three

days. "Something is basically wrong. It is not acceptable that because the rainfall was heavy nothing could be done."

The problem was reclamation of the area around the mouth of the Mithi river, said Debi Goenka of the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG).

The Maharashtra Government as well as the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests did not heed the objections raised by environmentalists.

As a result, the mouth of the river narrowed at the Mahim Bay, reducing its capacity to handle the inflow and outflow of

water. This was what led to extensive flooding on July 26.

Debris dumped

Mr. Goenka said the river had been diverted at one point, the mangroves alongside reclaimed and construction debris dumped near it. And indiscriminate quarrying around the lake, which feeds the river, resulted in one-third of it getting silted up.

The steady destruction of over 1,000 acres of mangroves in the past three or four years also contributed to the current crisis. "Wetlands act as sponges but their absorption capacity has been reduced," he said.

Central team submits report on Cauvery to Government

Panel says the position is "better" than last year

NEW DELHI: The central team that visited Cauvery basin in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu submitted its report to the Government on Tuesday. The team was despatched at the behest of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to study the "ground realities" about the release of Cauvery waters by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu as per the interim award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. This was after DMK-led opposition parties and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa met him in New Delhi and sought his intervention.

According to highly placed sources, the team has observed that the position was "better" than last year. On July 31, the shortfall in Cauvery water releases from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu was about 16.7 thousand million cubic feet and the position was improving by the day because of good rainfall in the upper reaches. "If the

present trend continues, Tamil Nadu may manage to salvage some kuruva crop, though they said that most of it is damaged for lack of water," the sources said.

The team is said to have observed that on July 31, the active storage in the four Karnataka reservoirs was 87 per cent compared to 54 per cent last year. From August 1, water flows from Krishnarajasagar had improved in addition to the Kabini reservoir.

In Tamil Nadu, the storage position in Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu was 46 tmcft on July 31, as compared to 35 tmcft during the corresponding period last year. The shortage was 16.7 tmcft on July 31.

Central Water Commission Member, B.S. Ahuja led the team. The two members were Commissioner (Projects) A.D. Bhardwaj and Additional Commissioner in Ministry of Agriculture, Shamsheer Singh. They visited

both the States from July 29 to 31.

The team's mandate was to assess the position on the ground with regard to the water storage in four Karnataka reservoirs and Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu, as well as assess the rainfall and crop sowing in both the States.

Close on the heels of visit of Tamil Nadu political leaders to New Delhi, Karnataka Chief Minister Dharam Singh also met the Prime Minister here on Sunday to request him not to take action on Tamil Nadu's representations as in view of good rainfall in the catchment area, the shortfall in releases to Tamil Nadu would be made up.

Based on the report of the central team, the Prime Minister would decide whether a meeting of the political-level Cauvery River Authority (CRA), as demanded by Tamil Nadu, was now necessary.

16 2 THE

Cool Technology

US-Asia-Pacific partnership on clean development to deal with emissions

THERE is nothing cloak-and-dagger about the new climate agreement between the US, Australia, China, South Korea and India, all non-signatories to the Kyoto Protocol. They do make strange bedfellows, though: The US and Australia are the world's biggest polluters while the rest emit much lower volumes of greenhouse gases (GHGs). The former are also the only two developed countries who are outside the Protocol as they do not want to be bound by its scale-back-emissions matrix that requires member-signatories to reduce GHG emissions in a phased manner. President Bush has repeatedly stated that he will not compromise US economic growth rates by cutting back on energy consumption. He is batting instead for stepping up research and development in clean technology that can make emissions non-polluting, while continuing with present energy consumption levels, notwithstanding the time lag in bringing new technology from the drawing board to the ground. He has also, in the past, expressed concern that India and China, as emerging economies, remain outside the Kyoto Protocol, another reason why he refused to be part of it.

EU countries have been adhering to the Protocol's guidelines, and many (excluding the former East European bloc) have achieved emissions reduction largely through public awareness, industrial incentives and fines, and alternative energy resourcing. The EU has reacted to the new Asia-Pacific pact by threatening to push for legally binding global restrictions on GHG emissions. What does the new climate agreement — that the US and Australia see as an alternative to Kyoto — mean for India? India's participation in the new US initiative on climate change is in continuation of the Indo-US energy dialogue that includes transfer of nuclear fuel and technology. With India and China's energy needs expected to rise with expanded economic activity, it is imperative that we also take part in initiatives that seek to reduce emissions with least cost to the economy. If big players consciously engage in clean technology and we can benefit from tech-transfer, we should go for it. India sees the new climate pact that promotes clean technology as complementing the Kyoto Protocol — as long as we remain outside its provisions.

2/8 Climate change: ^{environment} Gleneagles and after

The Gleneagles Summit of the G8 in early July, which British Prime Minister Tony Blair had relied upon to bring the United States in line with the European commitment to targeted reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, has had a contrary outcome. The U.S. not only persisted with its questioning of the scientific basis of the theory of global warming arising from GHG emissions but also got its stance incorporated in the declaration of the summit. This dealt a rebuff to developing countries such as India, which have been insisting on the principle of "common but differentiated" obligations for the developed and the developing countries to reduce emission of carbon dioxide and other GHGs. Some environmentalists saw the decision of the G8 to discuss climate change further in November as a step towards bringing the developing countries too under targeted reductions – a point that the U.S. has been insisting upon as a precondition for its accession to the Kyoto Protocol. However, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made it clear at that time that the right forum for negotiations – as distinct from dialogue – on the issue was the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, under whose auspices the Kyoto Protocol was initiated.

More important than the fact of the U.S. being the single biggest contributor to GHG emissions is its increasing tendency, under the Bush administration, towards unilateralism in matters such as ecology and elimination of nuclear weapons that warrant a global approach and cooperation. Evident in this are the quest for hegemony – economic and military – and a lack of appreciation of the basic maladies of the present system of economic and political management. The world not only shares a common environment but it is also universalising the same market economy system that contributed to environmental degradation in the last few centuries because of its reliance on unremitting expansion of consumption on the basis of widening inequalities and not setting an economic value to the environment and natural features that ought to be considered the common heritage of mankind. The U.S. and Australia, which are the only developed countries to have reneged on the Kyoto Protocol, have now declared an "Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate" with four other countries – India, China, Japan, and South Korea – at the Asian Regional Forum meeting in Laos. The emphasis of this partnership is on technological fixes to the problem of climate change and on preserving energy security and economic growth. India has described this partnership as being complementary to and consistent with the Kyoto accord, which both India and China had ratified. It is important that these two countries recognise the primacy of the Kyoto Protocol, viewing the new Asia-Pacific partnership as a supplementary measure, and do not get drawn into any arrangement that would undermine the very objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

■ TOLL RISES TO 891 ■ ARMY KEPT READY ■ LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS CANCELLED

Fresh rain halts Mumbai

SNS & PTI

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, July 31.— Struggling to recover from the heaviest rains in hundred years, fresh downpour today buffeted Mumbai and Raigad district of Maharashtra, flooding low-lying areas and halting air traffic in the state capital for nearly six hours even as the death toll reached 891.

Union civil aviation minister Mr Praful Patel said the backlog at Mumbai airport was being cleared and as many as 32 flights had operated in the one-and-a-half hours since it became operational shortly before noon today.

As heavy rains began at around 1 a.m. and continued till noon, chief minister Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh announced closure of educational institutions in Mumbai, Thane and Raigad tomorrow. Police advised residents not to move out of their homes unless it was essential and said Army, life boats and guards were kept stand-by.

Traffic on many roads was thrown out of gear and central railway has cancelled all long-distance trains via Igatpuri-Kalyan till 6 August.

In a bid to prevent massive traffic snarls along the streets and highways like the one witnessed last week when thousands were stuck in their vehicles for a couple of days, police diverted traffic from some of the places, Mumbai police

commissioner Mr AN Roy said.

A large number of trees were uprooted across the city since last night but there was no loss of life, fire brigade sources said.

The intensity of rain thinned and oscillated between moderate downpour to drizzle after 12 noon, calming fears of a repeat of torrential Tuesday last week which wrought havoc.

Heavy rains since yesterday also lashed Raigad district, where landslides and wall collapses had occurred last week, and flood water entered Mahad town, Nagothane, Roha and surrounding areas. There was a landslide at Krushnagar near Goregaon. The heavy rains in catchment areas filled up most of the dams.

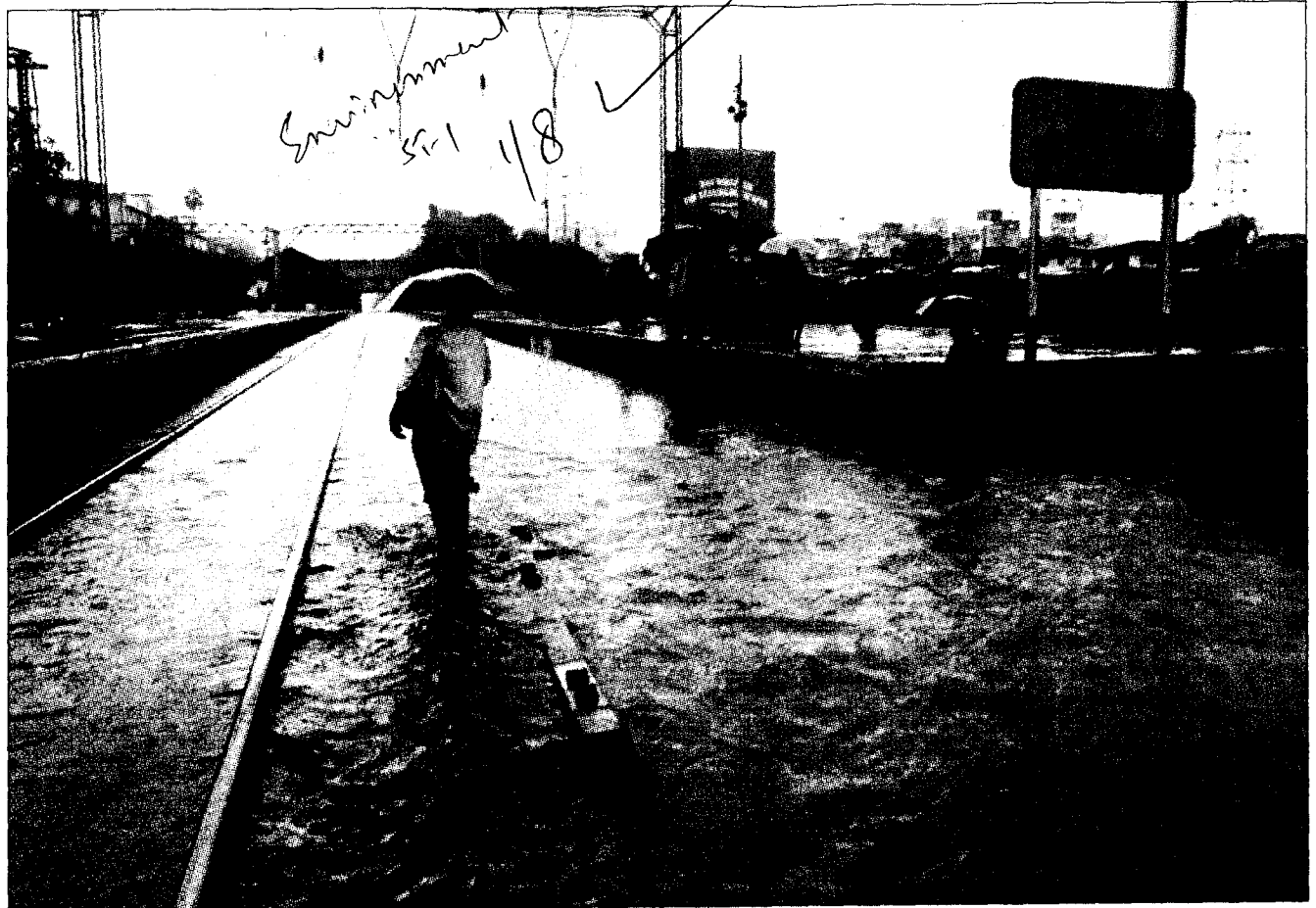
Centre's order

The day after a major disaster was averted when an Air India plane overshot the runway the Central government urged the airlines to curtail the number of their flights to Mumbai in the next couple of days in view of forecast of heavy rains and the agony of passengers there.

Bollywood PIL

Bollywood personalities today decided to file a public interest litigation in Bombay High Court protesting "failure" of government machinery to protect lives and properties of people in the monsoon fury.

Another report in
Kolkata Plus I



OFF TRACK: Submerged tracks at Sion station after the fresh downpour. In Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI (Another photograph on page 4)

Kolkata-Mumbai flights disrupted

KOLKATA, July 31. — Flight schedules between Kolkata and Mumbai were disrupted today after poor visibility coupled with torrential rain forced suspension of landing of aircraft at Mumbai airport. Visibility at Mumbai airport went below the limits permissible for landing. Also, the services of the instrument landing system were not available. After an Air India plane had skidded off the wet runway yesterday, Airport Authority officials in Mumbai today issued a notam (notice to airmen) saying the runway was unfit for landing. The notam continued till noon.

As a result three flights, which left Kolkata for Mumbai, were diverted to other airports. Indian Airlines flight to Mumbai, which left Kolkata at 6 a.m. was diverted to Bangalore, that of Jet Airways which left at about 6.30 a.m., was diverted to Pune while a Sahara Airlines aircraft, which left at 8.40 a.m., was diverted to Hyderabad. The first flight from Mumbai which was scheduled to come to Kolkata around 9 a.m., arrived at 3.05 p.m. The arrival of Indian Airlines and Sahara Airlines flights from Mumbai, were also delayed by about five hours. The delayed

arrival of aircraft caused consequential disruption in some of the flights in the afternoon. IA combined its two evening flights to Mumbai and announced that the flight would leave for Mumbai at 7.40 p.m. Sahara Airlines also announced that it would combine its two evening flights to Mumbai into one and Jet Airways cancelled two of its flights scheduled to take off in the afternoon and evening today. Most of the passengers were intimated over phone by the airlines concerned about the situation in Mumbai and change in schedules. — SNS

নতুন পরিবেশ-চুক্তির বিরুদ্ধে সব বিজেপি

ভিয়েনতিয়েন ও নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ জুলাই: পৃথিবীর উষ্ণতা বৃদ্ধি ঠেকাতে এবং পরিবেশবান্ধব জ্বালানি ব্যবহারের জন্য আমেরিকার সঙ্গে সমঝোতায় রাজি হয়ে সমালোচনার মুখে পড়ল মনমোহন সরকার। যে মার্কিন প্রশাসন কিয়োটো চুক্তি মেনে নিতে রাজি হয়নি, তার সঙ্গে ভারত এমন সমঝোতায় গেল কেন, তা নিয়ে সংসদে প্রশ্ন তুলেছে প্রধান বিরোধী দল বিজেপি। আর এ ধরনের একটা সমঝোতা খাড়া করে কিয়োটো চুক্তিকে খাটো করার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে কেন, প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন পরিবেশবিদেরা।

পৃথিবীর উষ্ণতা বৃদ্ধি কমানোর লক্ষ্যে করা কিয়োটো চুক্তি মানতে রাজি হয়নি আমেরিকা এবং অস্ট্রেলিয়া। সেই দু'টি দেশই এই নতুন সমঝোতায় প্রধান উদ্যোগী। শরিক ভারত, জাপান, চীন, দক্ষিণ কোরিয়াও। এশিয়া এবং প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে পরিবেশ দূষণ কমানো, এ বিষয়ে জাতীয় লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করা, জ্বালানির প্রয়োজনীয়তা মেটাতে পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা এবং পরিবেশ-সহযোগী জ্বালানি ব্যবহারের উপর গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে এই সমঝোতায়। আজ লাওসের রাজধানী ভিয়েনতিয়েনে 'এশিয়া-প্যাসিফিক সিকিওরিটি ফোরাম'-এর বৈঠকে সমঝোতার কথা ঘোষণা করা হয়।

রাজ্যসভায় আজ প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশোবন্ত সিংহ সরকারের

জবাবদিহি চান। তাঁর আশঙ্কা, কিয়োটো চুক্তিতে ভারত যে অঙ্গীকার করেছিল, নতুন চুক্তি হলে সেই প্রতিশ্রুতি পালন করা হবে না। লাওসে ভারতের বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের প্রতিমন্ত্রী রাও ইন্ড্রজিৎ সিংহ অবশ্য বলেছেন, ভারতের জ্বালানির অভাব মেটাতে এই সমঝোতার দরকার ছিল। পাশাপাশি পরিবেশ যাতে নষ্ট না হয়, সে দিকেও নজর রাখতে হবে। উন্নয়ন, জ্বালানি এবং পরিবেশরক্ষা-এ সবার ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখতেই এই সমঝোতা।

কিন্তু পরিবেশ রক্ষায় এই সমঝোতা কতটা সহায়ক হবে, তা নিয়েই প্রশ্ন পরিবেশবিদের। তাঁদের অভিযোগ, তাপমাত্রা বৃদ্ধির জন্য দায়ী গ্রিন হাউস গ্যাসের পরিমাণ কতটা কমাতে হবে, সে বিষয়ে নির্দিষ্ট কিছুই বলা হয়নি।

পরিবেশ রক্ষায় বিধিনিষেধ আরোপ করার কোনও বন্দোবস্ত নেই। চুক্তিবদ্ধ দেশগুলি প্রতিশ্রুতি পালন করবে, এমন কোনও নিশ্চয়তাও এতে দেওয়া যাচ্ছে না। পরিবেশ-বিশেষজ্ঞদের আরও অভিযোগ, কিয়োটো চুক্তিতে সই না করার বিষয়টি আড়াল করতেই আমেরিকা আর অস্ট্রেলিয়া এত উদ্যোগী। তারা উঠেপড়ে প্রমাণ করতে লেগেছে, উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলিও কিয়োটো চুক্তির পক্ষে নয়। আমেরিকা এবং অস্ট্রেলিয়ার তরফে এই অভিযোগ খারিজ করা হয়েছে। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

Missing Ranthambore tigers: probe ordered

Environment

Special Correspondent ¹⁹⁻⁸ ^{2M7}
JAIPUR: The Rajasthan Government has entrusted Alka Kala, Principal Secretary, Women and Child Development, to probe into the missing tigers of Ranthambore National Park. She has been asked to submit her report on Ranthambore in a month.

The immediate provocation for the Government to announce yet another enquiry was the release of the figures of the tiger census of May-June 2005. In May-June 2005, the figures of the tiger census were announced. The figures, released by V.P. Singh, chairman of the Empowered Committee on Forests and Wildlife Management set up by the Rajasthan Govern-

ment, indicated a decline in the number of tigers from 46 (inclusive of six tigers in the neighbouring Kailadevi and one tiger in Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary) in 2003-04 to 26. The State Empowered Committee, which is on an extension, is also supposed to find out the reasons for the decline in the number of tigers.

Besides, there is the much-awaited report from the Central Tiger Task Force, headed by Sunita Narain, which is expected to submit its report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by the end of the month.

Rajasthan Minister for Forest and Environment Laxmi Narain Dave, who announced the new enquiry committee, said: "The State Government has ordered

the investigation to counter any allegations of irregularities in the census figures." Mr. Dave said pointing out that The CBI too had sought information from the Government to verify the correctness of the census figures in the past, he said.

It is an accepted fact in the wildlife circles here that the successive managements of the Ranthambore Project Tiger have been, over a period, progressively inflating the figures of tigers in every census to make it appear that everything is fine with the flora and fauna of the Park.

Wildlife experts have been saying that the successive managements of the reserve have been inflating the figures of tigers in the park.



A file picture of a tiger in Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan. - PHOTO: AFP

Can't make noise at night, rules SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JULY 19

THE Supreme Court has banned use of loudspeakers and vehicular horns and bursting of fire crackers near residential areas from 11 pm to 6 am. A bench comprising Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti and Justice Ashok Bhan yesterday said no loudspeaker could be used during the period "except in public emergencies".

Restricting loudspeakers even during the day, the CJI said the decibel level of megaphones or public address system should not "exceed 10db(a) above the ambient noise standards for the area or 75 db(a) whichever is lower".

The court said, "The noise polluters have no regard for the inconvenience and discomfort of the people in the vicinity" and added "no one can claim a right to create noise even in his own premises which would travel beyond his precincts and cause nuisance to neigh-

bours and others."

The prohibitions, it said, had been imposed under articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution which rendered it the authority of law of the land till Parliament made suitable legislation.

The court order came on a bunch of petitions one of which was about a rape victim whose cries for help were drowned in loud music being played in the neighbourhood. On firecrackers, the court did not accept the plea on lifting the ban during Diwali saying, "If relaxation is allowed to one, there will be no justification for not permitting relaxation to others and if we do so the relaxation will become the rule".

The Bench said noise had to be evaluated on the basis of the chemical composition of the crackers. The department of explosives will have to undertake research to specify the proportion and maximum permissible weight of every chemical used in manufacturing the firecrackers, it added.

Climate change deniers shift their ground

Instead of denying climate change is happening, the U.S. now denies that we need proper regulation to stop it.

George Monbiot

ONE DAY we will look back on the effort to deny the effects of climate change as we now look back on the work of Trofim Lysenko, a Soviet agronomist who insisted that the entire canon of genetics was wrong. There was no limit to an organism's ability to adapt to changing environments. Cultivated correctly, crops could do anything the Soviet leadership wanted them to do. Wheat, for example, if grown in the right conditions, could be made to produce rye.

Because he was able to mobilise enthusiasm among the peasants for collectivisation, and could present Stalin with a Soviet scientific programme, Lysenko's hogwash became state policy. He became director of the Institute of Genetics and president of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He used his position to outlaw conventional genetics, strip its practitioners of their positions and have some of them arrested and even killed. Lysenkoism governed state science from the late 1930s until the early 1960s, helping to wreck Soviet agriculture.

No one is yet being sent to the Guantanamo gulag for producing the wrong results. But the denial of climate science in the United States bears some of the marks of Lysenkoism. It is, for example, state-sponsored. Last month *The New York Times* revealed that Philip Cooney, a lawyer with no scientific training, had been imported into the White House from the American Petroleum Institute, to control the presentation of climate science. He edited scientific reports, striking out evidence of glacier retreat and inserting phrases suggesting that there was serious scientific doubt about climate change. Working with the Exxon-sponsored PR man Myron Ebell, he lobbied successfully to get rid of the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, who had refused to accept the official line.

Mr. Cooney's work was augmented by Harlan Watson, the U.S. Government's chief climate negotiator, who insisted that the findings of the National Academy of Sciences be excised from official reports. Now Joe Barton, the Republican chairman of the House committee on energy and commerce, has launched a congressional investigation of three U.S. scientists whose work reveals



George W. Bush and Tony Blair ... in cahoots on climate change? - PHOTO: REUTERS

the historical pattern of climate change. He has demanded that they hand over their records and reveal their sources of funding.

Perhaps most pertinently, the official policy of climate-change denial, like Lysenkoism, relies on a compliant press. Just as *Pravda* championed the disavowal of genetics, so the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Times* in the U.S., and the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* in the U.K. champion the Bush team's denial of climate science. Like *Pravda*, they dismiss it without showing any sign that they have read or understood it.

But climate change denial, like Lysenkoism, cannot last forever. Now, as the G8

communiqué shows, the White House is beginning to move on. Instead of denying that climate change is happening, it is denying that anything difficult needs to be done to prevent it. The other G8 leaders have gone along with this.

Faced with the greatest crisis humanity has ever encountered, the most powerful men in the world have meekly resolved to "promote" better practice and to "encourage" companies to do better. The R-word is half-mentioned twice: they will "improve regulatory ... frameworks." This could mean anything: most of the G8 governments define better regulation as less regulation. Nowhere is there a clear statement that they will force anyone to do anything to stop destroying the conditions that sustain human life.

Instead they have agreed to "raise awareness," "accelerate deployment of cleaner technologies" and "diversify our energy supply mix." There is nothing wrong with these objectives. But unless there is regulation to reduce the amount of fossil fuel we use, alternative technologies are a waste of time and money, for they will supplement rather than replace coal and oil and gas burning. What counts is not what we do but what we do not. Our success or failure in tackling climate change depends on just one thing: how much fossil fuel we leave in the ground. And leaving it in the ground won't happen without regulation.

They agreed to support energy efficiency, which would be a good thing if it did not rely on a "market-led approach." Otherwise, they will cross their fingers and place their faith in a series of techno-fixes, some of which work, and some of which cause more problems than they solve. They will study the potential of "clean coal," which so far remains an oxymoron, and accelerate the burial of carbon dioxide, which might or might not stay where it is put. They will promote "carbon offsets" (you pay someone else to annul your sins by planting trees or building hydroelectric dams), which have so far been a disastrous failure. They will encourage the development of hydrogen fuel cells, which do not produce energy but use it, and the production of biofuels, which will set up a competition for arable land between cars and people, exacerbating the famines that

climate change is likely to cause. Not bad for six months of negotiations.

We cannot blame only the Americans. While Mr. Bush's team has been as obstructive as possible, the United Kingdom has scarcely been doing the work of angels. Like Mr. Bush, Tony Blair will contemplate anything except restraining the people who are killing the planet. While the U.K. produces 2.2 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases, companies that extract fossil fuels responsible for over 10 per cent of global emissions are listed on the London stock exchange. One of the reasons they find London attractive is that, thanks to our lax financial regulations, they are not obliged to reveal their potential greenhouse liabilities to investors. Far from doing anything about this, Mr. Blair complains that our financial rules are "hugely inhibiting of efficient business."

Our problem is that, just as genetics was crushed by totalitarian communism, meaningful action on climate change has been prohibited by totalitarian capitalism. When I use this term I do not mean that the people who challenge it are rounded up and sent to break rocks in Siberia. I mean that it intrudes into every corner of our lives, governs every social relation, becomes the lens through which every issue must be seen. It is the total system which leaves no molecule of earth or air uncosted and unsold. And, like Soviet totalitarianism, it allows no solution to pass which fails to enhance its power. The only permitted answer to the effects of greed is more greed.

I do not know how long this system can last. But I did see something in Scotland last week that I had not seen before. At the G8 Alternatives meeting in Edinburgh and the People and Planet conference in Stirling, climate change, until recently neglected by campaigners, stirred fiercer emotions than any other topic.

People are already mobilising for demonstrations planned by the Campaign against Climate Change on December 3. I saw a resolve to make this the biggest issue in British politics. If we succeed, the new campaign will crash head-on into the totalitarian system. But as more people wake up to what the science says, it is not entirely certain that the system will win. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

13 JUL 2005

THE HINDO

Bush supports Manmohan's stand on global warming

BU-15
9/2

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gleneagles (Scotland): Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has found an unlikely champion in US President George W Bush. The American President offered a significant boost to India's views on climate change and sustainable development by agreeing "wholeheartedly that while dealing with environment, one

the right balance between protecting environment and not perpetuating poverty."

In what sources said was an innovative scheme—overall hailed by Bush, French President Jacques Chirac, Mexican President Vicente Fox and South Africa's Thabo Mbeki—Singh told gathered leaders that G8 and G5 partnerships in research and development for clean technolo-

technology, he said.

Bush welcomed Singh's strong statement rejecting a UK- and Europe-led attempt to bounce some of the planet's biggest players into a tightly controlled deal on cutting greenhouse gas emissions and using clean technology.

Singh, who spoke loudest and clearest of the leaders of the five emerging economies specially invited to the G8 summit, declared "it is important that G8 countries do not impose standards" on the developing world.

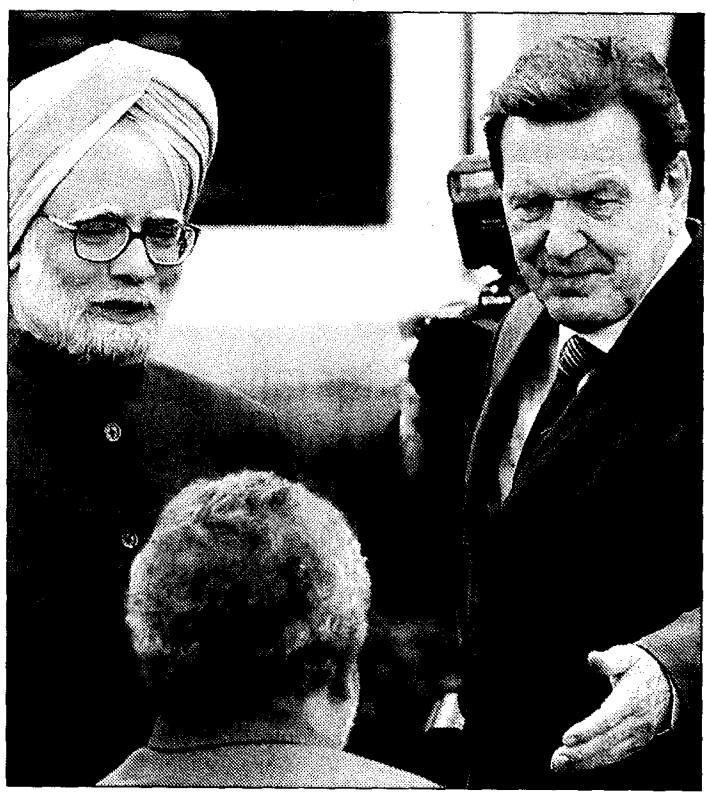
The G5 nations invited to the G8 meet include India, China, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa.

Singh's clarion call for the right of India and the developing world to chart its own destiny without G8-imposed guidelines was a reference to the action plan for clean technology put forward by the G8.

Singh agreed that India "along with the whole world shares responsibility. So all of us have an obligation to do all we can to safeguard the environment". However, in yet another blow for the rights of the developing world, he said, "But the major responsibility is of the developed countries who have accumulated carbon emissions for a long period of time."

In remarks rather less conducive to praise from Bush, Singh compared carbon emissions per Indian with that of the average American.

Indian diplomats said that contrary to the hype built up around the special G8 invitation to India and China, "there was no reference to Asian brown haze by anybody. Nobody suggested there was any special status (as climate polluters) by India and China and nobody said they needed to do anything special".



Indian PM Manmohan Singh and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder talk to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio da Silva in Gleneagles

could not afford to neglect the imperatives of development".

In what many believe to be the loudest call yet on the Third World's behalf from a head of government at the summit, Singh said, "We have to achieve

gy was the only way the developing world could clean up its act.

Only "additionality"—by which Singh meant additional money paid by the West to the Third World—would allow countries like India to embrace clean

Greenhouse gas emissions, G8 and India

The Bush administration proves obdurate on climate change.

Qui perment

N. Ram

ONE OF the central and most contentious issues taken up by the G8 Summit at Gleneagles is the challenge of reducing greenhouse emissions in the context of climate change. The related questions are the responsibilities of developed and developing countries, and what to do to move the post-Kyoto process forward given the entrenched forces of opposition led by the Bush administration.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has repeatedly claimed an intention to make the United Kingdom the world leader in the area. He has taken on difficult climate change issues in the hope a *via media* posture could be struck by the G8 and the five 'outreach' developing countries — Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa — without 'isolating' the United States. Unfortunately, the G8 agenda was disrupted by the murderous terrorist strikes in London. Mr. Blair had to spend much of the opening day away from the summit and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw substituted gamely chairing the afternoon session on climate change and foreign affairs.

Everyone knows that the Bush administration is a huge part of the challenge of tackling climate change issues, Mr. Blair's pre-summit assurances and post-summit spin notwithstanding. This American President has little patience with the U.N. framework convention. In 1990, his father as U.S. President signed a G8 summit statement in Houston that "climate change is of key importance" and "we are committed to undertake common efforts to limit emissions of greenhouse gases." The next year, the London summit of the G8 promised to "design and implement concrete strategies to limit net emissions of greenhouse gases." In 1992, in Munich, the group went so far as to promise "rapid and concrete action."

All that went up in smoke with the rise of George W. Bush. In 1998, the Clinton administration signed on to the Kyoto Protocol.

Three years later the Bush administration withdrew the U.S. signature.

The British media made out that Mr. Bush had "conceded ground" in the run-up to Gleneagles. Only a fortnight ago, his administration was refusing to recognise any link between human activity and global warming. Some days before the summit, a White House statement set out the following "guiding principles" for the U.S. approach to G8 and beyond: "Climate change is a serious long-term issue, requiring sustained action over many generations by both developed and developing countries. Developing innovative technologies that are cleaner and more efficient is the key to addressing our climate challenge... economic growth is essential to success... we oppose any policy shifts that would achieve reductions by putting Americans out of work, or by simply shifting emissions from one state to another, or from the U.S. to another country. Like us, developing countries are unlikely to join in approaches that foreclose their own economic growth and development."

The G8 communiqué, when it came at the end of the Gleneagles summit, proved a damp squib. It recognises global warming as a "serious long-term challenge" for the entire planet and promises a "new dialogue" on climate change. The G8 also promise to act with "resolve and urgency" to reduce the gas emissions thought responsible — but studiously avoid specifying targets or a timetable.

There is widespread unhappiness over the summit outcome among the community of environmentalists. The BBC reported John Lanchbery, head of climate change at the U.K.'s Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, as saying: "The U.S. was inevitably the sticking point. President Bush has refused to need worldwide calls for measures to tackle climate change despite his own scientists and some Republican politicians demanding action, too." What is clear is that, far from seeing the Bush administration move towards the positions espoused by France, Britain, Germany, and Canada, the summit

saw the non-American members cave in. Tellingly, on Mr. Blair's pet project, the recognition of the science of climate change, the communiqué says: "while uncertainty remains in our understanding of climate science, we know enough to act now."

On the other hand, environmentalists have given a guarded welcome to the joint statement of the five large developing countries issued at the sidelines of the G8 Summit. This statement does mark out a distinctive position revolving round "the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities" and a soft demand that developed countries should take the lead in international action to combat climate change by "fully implementing their obligations of reducing emissions and of providing additional financing and the transfer of cleaner, low-emission and cost-effective technologies to developing countries." The statement cites the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol in this context.

India's stand

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in his contribution to the G8 Summit discussion, elaborated on the official Indian stand on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Interestingly, President Bush declared that he agreed wholeheartedly with this approach.

According to a media briefing by Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, this is the substance of what Dr. Singh said in the G8 (plus 5) summit discussion:

The legitimate fora and proper instrumentalities for dealing with these issues are multilateral fora and multilateral agreements. In this connection, the international consensus is represented by the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Whatever is done must continue to be based on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. All countries must accept this principle.

The world shares the same environment.

Problems of climate change have a global impact and cannot be limited within national boundaries. All countries have obligations to safeguard and protect the environment. But the major responsibility is that of developed countries, which have accumulated carbon emissions over a very long time. Given current trends, this is unlikely to change dramatically, unless drastic action is taken.

In per capita terms, CO2 emissions by India are a very small fraction of what is seen, for example, in the United States, or even the world average. Despite this, India has done a great deal in terms of environmentally sustainable development. India is one of the few countries with a separate Ministry dealing with renewable energy. The country has done considerable research in new and environmentally friendly energy technologies. It is committed to ensuring its growth but in an environmentally sustainable manner.

India has major programmes for developing two major sources of clean energy: hydroelectric power and nuclear power. The international community and international financing institutions must re-look at their lending policies for large hydropower projects. As for nuclear power, President Bush himself has pointed to the need to go forward with it as a source of clean energy.

In short, climate change affects us all. But there are certain limits to what developing countries can do. What they need to achieve is the right balance between the environment and development, between protecting the environment and not perpetuating poverty. It is important that the G8 countries do not impose on developing countries standards divorced from reality. It is important that whatever is agreed upon takes into account the capabilities and preoccupations of developing countries.

G8 countries, according to Mr. Blair, will meet in November for further discussions. But for those who hoped for some kind of breakthrough in the post-Kyoto process, there is a sense of bitter letdown.

কিয়োটোর ছায়াতেই আজ শুরু জি-৮ বৈঠক

কোপেনহাগেন, ৬ জুলাই: পৃথিবীর উত্তাপ বাড়ছে। এবং মানুষই তার জন্য অনেকাংশে দায়ী। অবশেষে এ কথা স্বীকার করে নিলেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশ।

স্কটল্যান্ডে জি-৮ শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে যোগ দিতে যাওয়ার পথে ডেনমার্ক বৃশ জানিয়েছেন, আশঙ্কাজনক ভাবেই পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা বাড়ছে। তার পরেও অবশ্য কিয়োটো চুক্তি মানতে নারাজ বৃশ। তাঁর সাফ কথা, কিয়োটো আমেরিকার জন্য কার্যকর নয়, এমনকী বিশ্বের জন্যও। কারণ, বিশ্বের অনেক শিল্পোন্নত দেশকেই ওই চুক্তির আওতায় আনা হয়নি। জি-৮ ভুক্ত বাকি ৭টি দেশ ওই চুক্তিতে সই করলেও তাদের সঙ্গে সহমত পোষণ করেন না বৃশ। তিনি বরং কিয়োটো পরবর্তী যুগের জন্য প্রস্তুত হচ্ছেন, যেখানে সব দেশ মিলে গ্রিনহাউস গ্যাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে ব্যবস্থা নেবে। স্কটল্যান্ডের গ্রেনইগলসে জি-৮ সম্মেলনে যোগ দিতে আজই দিল্লি থেকে রওনা হয়ে গিয়েছেন মনমোহন সিংহ। শুধু ভারতীয়

প্রধানমন্ত্রী নন, অর্ধনীতিবির হিমাচল জি-৮-এর মাফে বক্তৃতা দেননি তিনি। দেশ ছাড়ার আগে তিনি বলেছেন, এই শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের মাফে বৃহত্তর উন্নয়নের বাস্তবসম্মত পন্থা নিয়ে আলোচনার সুযোগ আছে। উন্নত ও উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলির মধ্যে প্রকৃত বোঝাপড়ার মাধ্যমেই সেটা সম্ভব।

এ বাংলার সম্মেলনের মূল সুর সেই গ্রোবাল ওয়ার্মিং বা বিশ্ব জুড়ে বেড়ে চলা তাপমাত্রা। কয়েক দশক ধরেই দুর্ভাগের জন্য বাড়ছে ভূপৃষ্ঠের তাপমাত্রা। শিল্পোন্নত দেশগুলি যাতে দুর্ভাগ জনাই কিয়োটো চুক্তি তৈরি করা হয়েছিল।

শিল্পোন্নত ৮টি দেশের সংগঠন জি-৮-এর বাকি সদস্যরা সেই চুক্তিতে সই করলেও বিশ্বের সব চেয়ে বেশি দুর্ভাগ সৃষ্টিকারী দেশ আমেরিকা করেনি। তাদের অর্ধনৈতিক স্বার্থ ক্ষুণ্ণ হবে, এই যুক্তিতেই সই করেনি তারা। সারা বিশ্বের বিকার গায়ে না-মাখলেও স্কটল্যান্ডে যাওয়ার পথে গ্রিনহাউস গ্যাসের বিষয়টি মেনে নিলেন বৃশ।

ব্রিটিশ সংবাদমাধ্যম সম্পত্তি জানিয়েছিল, কিয়োটো চুক্তি নিয়ে মনোভাব নরম করতে রাজি বৃশ। কিন্তু মার্কিন কর্তারা জানিয়েছেন, বৃশ আগের অবস্থানে এখনও অনড়। ডেনমার্কের তিনি বলেছেন, নিজেদের জাতীয় ও অর্ধনৈতিক স্বার্থের জন্যই আমেরিকা মাটির নীচের জালানির ব্যবহার কমাবে। সে কারণে তারা বিশ্ব জুড়েই বিকল্প জ্বালানি ব্যবহারে জোর দিতে চায়। সব মিলিয়ে কিয়োটো চুক্তি নিয়ে জি-৮-এর বাকি সদস্যদের সঙ্গে বিরোধ মেটাতে তৎপর আমেরিকা।

কিন্তু বৃশের এই ঘোষণায় রীতিমতো স্কিণ্ড পরিবেশবাদী সংগঠনগুলি। ব্রিটেনের পরিবেশবাদী সংগঠন গ্রিনপিসের ডিরেক্টর স্টিফেন টিভেল বৃশের মন্তব্যকে নতুন কিছু নয়' আখ্যা দিয়ে বৃশকে 'বিচ্ছিন্ন' করার জন্য আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন জি-৮ এর বাকি দেশগুলির কাছে।

সম্মেলনের আগে বৃশ যখন বাকি দেশগুলিকে পাশে পেতে তৎপর, তখন সম্মেলন নিয়েই ক্ষোভ দেখাতে শুরু করেছে একাধিক সংগঠন। যেখানে

এই শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের বিরুদ্ধে বিক্ষোভ দেখান। কেউ বা জাম বাজিয়ে জি-৮ এর বিরুদ্ধে স্লোগান দেন। তাঁরা গাড়ির কাচ ভাঙচুর করে, পথ আটকে, রেল লাইন অবরোধ করে পুলিশকে বাতীবাস্ত করে তোলেন। মধ্য স্কটল্যান্ডের প্রধান সড়কটি তাঁরা চার ফুট অবরোধ করেন। শেষ পর্যন্ত বিক্ষোভকারীদের হঠাৎ দিয়ে দিলেও কাল সম্মেলন শুরুর আগে ফের এ ধরনের ঘটনা ঘটতে পারে বলে সতর্কতা নিয়েছে পুলিশ। — রয়টার্স

এই শীর্ষ সম্মেলন হতে, আজ গ্রেনইগলসে সেই হোটেলের বাইরে, একাধিক সংগঠন তুমুল বিক্ষোভ দেখিয়েছে। পুলিশের সঙ্গে তাদের খণ্ডযুদ্ধ হয়। পূর্জিবাদ-বিরোধী, বিশ্বায়ন-বিরোধী সংগঠনগুলির সদস্যরা বিক্ষোভ দেখাতে গিয়ে অভিযোগ করেন, অল্প কিছু উন্নত দেশ বাকি দেশগুলিকে শোষণ করে গোটা বিশ্বের ভারসাম্য নষ্ট করেছে।

এই শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের বিরুদ্ধে বিক্ষোভ দেখান। কেউ বা জাম বাজিয়ে জি-৮ এর বিরুদ্ধে স্লোগান দেন। তাঁরা গাড়ির কাচ ভাঙচুর করে, পথ আটকে, রেল লাইন অবরোধ করে পুলিশকে বাতীবাস্ত করে তোলেন। মধ্য স্কটল্যান্ডের প্রধান সড়কটি তাঁরা চার ফুট অবরোধ করেন। শেষ পর্যন্ত বিক্ষোভকারীদের হঠাৎ দিয়ে দিলেও কাল সম্মেলন শুরুর আগে ফের এ ধরনের ঘটনা ঘটতে পারে বলে সতর্কতা নিয়েছে পুলিশ। — রয়টার্স

Bush inches in from cold on warming

Crash ride

PHILIP WEBSTER
AND DAVID CHARTER

Gleneagles (Scotland), July 6: Prospects of a deal on climate change at the G8 summit rose today after UK Prime Minister Tony Blair made clear that he would not sign up to an agreement that isolated America and President Bush admitted that human activity contributed to global warming.

The Prime Minister rejected the idea put forward by environmental groups for the summit to agree a communique that excluded America by stipulating a timetable for reducing gas emissions, to which it is opposed.

Gordon Brown, the UK chancellor, let slip details of the deal today when he disclosed that the World

Bank was prepared to put up large sums of money to help developing countries to introduce cleaner fuel technologies. This would bring them into a post-Kyoto dialogue involving the US, which has made huge investment in developing the technologies and stands to benefit from much of the spending.

Blair, who said that Britain had long accepted that America would not sign up to the Kyoto treaty on global warming, said that if there was a disagreement it had to be openly acknowledged. But if they did not get an agreement that involved America there would not be an agreement that worked.

He added that it was far too easy to "point the finger at America". China and India would be major producers over the next few years, and unless

they were involved in an agreement it would never happen.

Bush, speaking in Copenhagen on his way to Scotland, said: "Listen, I recognise the surface of the Earth is warmer and that increased greenhouse gases caused by humans has contributed to the problem. Kyoto did not work for us and frankly it did not work for the world because the developing nations were not included." He then added: "We are in what I call the post-Kyoto era. We would like to share technology to control greenhouse gases as much as possible. I cannot wait to share the strategy with my friends at the G8."

Britain believes that the presence of leaders from India, China, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil will help the chances of an agreement.

THE TIMES, LONDON

Gleneagles (Scotland), July 6 (Reuters): President George W. Bush grazed his hands when he collided with a police officer today while cycling through the grounds of Gleneagles, the Scottish luxury hotel where world leaders are meeting.

Bush, celebrating his 59th birthday, went for a ride shortly after arriving for the summit of the Group of Eight major powers. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said.

The collision with the policeman — ironically on security duty — occurred about a hour into his ride, with Bush going at a "pretty good speed". Bush slid along the road, suffering scrapes on his hands and arms that were bandaged by the White House doctor.

Global warming at Gleneagles: PM for N-option

C RAJA MOHAN

NEW DELHI, JULY 4

AS the world seeks to address the threat of climate change, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will make a strong pitch for nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels at the summit of the eight industrial democracies this week at Gleneagles, Scotland.

Along with top leaders of China, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, Singh will be joining the leaders of G-8 in Scotland to discuss practical ways to deal with the challenge of global warming.

Amid the intense squabble over global warming, there is an interesting congruence of views between India and the developing countries on the one side and the US on the other.

While the Europeans emphasize on regulations and quotas for the worldwide reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions, the Bush Administration's focus is on development of new options like nuclear power, clean coal technology and the use of hydrogen fuel for the transportation sector.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair is desperately trying to bridge the divide and put together a new global consensus to address the threat posed by the burning of fossil fuels that emit carbon dioxide and raise global temperatures.

The earlier consensus on reducing carbon emissions, the Kyoto Protocol, has been rejected by the Bush Administration.

Singh will insist that the principal responsibility for the reduction of global emissions of carbon dioxide rests with the advanced countries. The G-8 coun-

tries—the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan and Russia—account for 65 per cent of global GDP and 47 per cent of world's carbon emissions.

While underlining the importance of "common but differentiated responsibility" between the developed and developing countries, Singh would argue that answers to global warming must not come in the way of economic development. Nor should the regimes of global warming

Singh to argue that answers to global warming must not come in the way of economic development

restrict the use of energy by developing countries.

This was the point President Bush was making last week when he quoted former PM Indira Gandhi to say poverty and underdevelopment were the greatest sources of pollution.

The practical way to go beyond the Kyoto Protocol, India recognises, lies in deploying new energy technologies that will help both developed and developing nations to reduce carbon emissions.

The renewed interest in nuclear energy comes at a time when Delhi has stepped up its campaign to remove the current international restrictions against atomic energy cooperation with India. As Singh presses India's case of nuclear energy development, President Bush has been promoting it at home.

Manmohan to make aerial survey of flood-ravaged districts in Gujarat

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Issues direction that State's requirements of essential commodities be met on priority basis

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will make an aerial survey of the affected regions in Gujarat on Tuesday and hold discussions with Chief Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad.

Dr. Singh, who has spoken to Mr. Modi on the phone twice in the last two days, has assured the State administration of all Central help to improve the grim situation. "The Prime Minister will be making an aerial survey of the flood-affected areas in the State and will hold discussions on the flood situation with the Gujarat Chief Minister and senior State Government officials," the Prime Minister's media adviser, Sanjaya Baru, said.

Dr. Singh, who has been closely monitoring the flood situation, assured Mr. Modi of the Centre's commitment to extend all necessary assistance to ameliorate the distress of the people of Gujarat. The Centre on Tuesday issued directions to meet the State's requirements of essential commodities on a priority basis.

Union Home Secretary V. K. Duggal, who reviewed the situation here at a meeting of the high-level Inter-Ministerial Committee, said about three lakh people were evacuated to safer places. An Inter-Ministerial team for assessing the damage is likely to visit the State early next week. Citing reports, Mr. Duggal said floodwaters had started receding and life was slowly getting back to normal.

At the meeting, directions were issued to meet the State's requirements of sugar, wheat, rice and medicines. "All the concerned ministries and departments of the Central Government are extending full support to the Gujarat Government for meeting the situation," Mr. Duggal said.

20 districts affected

The floods had affected 20 out of the 25 districts in the State. Two villages each in Matar Talu-



PUSHED UP : Men take shelter on the roof of their home from floodwaters at Virpur near Vadodara on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

ka, Kheda Taluka and Memadabad Taluka are still marooned. "The State Government is trying to establish contact with all the villages by Monday evening. Nine Army columns have also been deployed. The Air Force has provided 11 helicopters for relief and rescue operations," he said. The meeting was told that CRPF personnel had been deployed in the flood-ravaged areas.

A report from Ahmedabad said that although rains had abated after lashing the State for

a week, the death toll mounted to 142 as fears of gastro-enteritis and other water-borne diseases loomed large and relief operations continued. In Surat, three persons died of gastro-enteritis.

A report from Vadodara said the Vishwamaitri was still flowing above the danger mark because of five to eight inches of rainfall since Sunday evening.

A report from Bhopal said the Army had been called to assist the civil administration in carrying out relief work in Katni and

Sagar districts, while incessant rain caused a flood situation in northeast Madhya Pradesh on Monday.

The rain hampered relief work at many places even as Chief Minister Babulal Gaur undertook an aerial survey of Katni and Satna districts and directed the officials to gear up relief work.

Road and railway traffic had been disrupted at many places, as rivers and rivulets were in spate. The Bina-Katni passenger

and Kota-Damoh shuttle were suspended on Monday, a West Central Railway spokesman said.

The Army's help was sought as several low-lying areas in Katni and Sagar districts were submerged, the state flood control room said. Several villages also remained cut off.

The rail track between Makronia and Ganeshganj stations in the Bina-Katni section of the West Central Railway remained submerged disrupting train ser-

vices.

A bus carrying 20 persons was reportedly washed away on the Sagar-Rehli route.

A woman was washed away by floodwaters in the Sunar within Damoh district's Hata tehsil on Sunday.

While the Narmada was flowing eight metres below the danger mark at Hoshangabad, the Tamas in Rewa and the Sunar and Vyamara rivers in Damoh districts were in spate, official sources said. — PTI, UNI

Global warming: Bush won't favour curbs on emissions

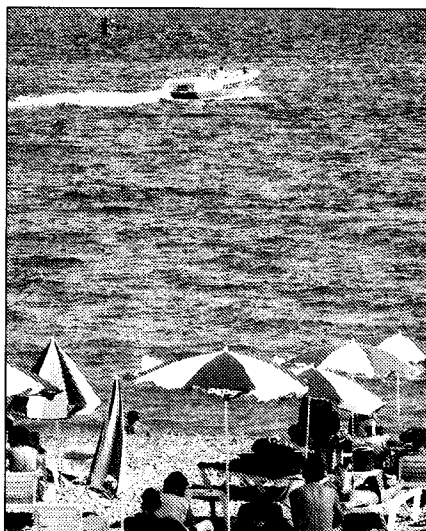
London: While the G8 has to tackle climate change, US President George W Bush vowed to spurn any Kyoto-style deal on the "significant" problem of global warming, he said in an interview to air on Britain's ITV. The President said ahead of the July 6 to 8 gathering in Scotland that global warming was "a significant, long-term issue that we've got to deal with".

However, any G8 climate change agreement in Scotland along the lines of the of the United Nations' Kyoto Protocol—which the US refused to sign—would get short shrift, he said.

Instead, he will call for new technology that limits global warming without harming business.

"If this (draft) looks like Kyoto, the answer is no," Bush said. "The Kyoto treaty would have wrecked our economy."

The Kyoto pact requires countries



Mediterranean beaches, like this one in Turkey, would become drier and hotter due to climate change

that have ratified it to limit emissions by a 2012 timeframe as compared to a 1990 benchmark.

The US President has strongly opposed action against climate change since he took office in 2001 in favour of further studies of the phenomena—despite significant global pressure that the United States, the world's largest consumer of fossil fuels, change its policies.

Bush said he wanted G8 leaders to support new technologies to limit warming without harming business. He underlined the US's \$20 billion investment in technologies such as zero-emission power stations and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

"I think you can grow your economy and at the same time do a better job of harnessing greenhouse gases," he said.

G8 negotiators are reportedly drawing up draft plans on climate change. AP

THE TIMES OF INDIA

G-8: America gives way on climate change

Action plan to clean up land and air transport, prevent world energy crisis

Gaby Hinsliff, Ned Temko
and Mark Townsend

LONDON: A historic deal on climate change which would see the U.S. sign up to cut greenhouse gas emissions was on Saturday night emerging after a day of frantic negotiations ahead of the G-8 summit.

The draft text hammered out by officials meeting in London is expected to pledge the world's richest countries to wean themselves off fossil fuels – not just to save the planet, but to prevent a worldwide energy crisis.

An action plan to be unveiled at the Gleneagles, Scotland, summit

this week will centre on a package to clean up land and air transport, and provide green technology to developing countries through a deal brokered by the World Bank.

U.S. concedes cause

The first hope of a breakthrough came on Saturday as the White House finally conceded that human activity was at least the partial cause of global warming.

But with British Prime Minister Tony Blair still pushing for more concrete action to clean up the planet, the final text is expected to gloss over differences between the U.S. and other countries over the science of global warming by say-

ing the changes are also necessary to prevent an energy crisis. With oil prices soaring to \$60 a barrel and fossil fuel supplies finite, the U.S. President George W. Bush is understood to have been swayed by fears over energy security.

"We were never going to get the Americans to accept everything on the science front or sign up to Kyoto: that was clear. But what they do accept is that there is climate change and that for reasons of energy security and just reducing pollution, they favour measures that reduce our dependence on carbon-based fuels," said a Whitehall source.

"The motivation might be dif-

ferent but the net results and the impact are the same."

French threat

French sources, meanwhile, suggested threats to produce a communique leaving the U.S. out had been effective, with the British and the French working together to bring the Americans on board.

The text completed on Saturday includes a pledge to cut greenhouse emissions – a reference to the Kyoto treaty which America did not sign up to, and recognition of man's impact on global warming. – ©Guardian Newspapers

Limited 2005

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THE HINDS

Delhi police nab Sariska tiger killer

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 30

*Sansar, remember
HT 1 1/2*

THE LAW has finally caught up with the poacher known as the Veerappan of the North.

The Delhi police on Thursday nabbed Sansar Chand, said to be the man behind the killing of tigers in the Sariska reserve. On the run since jumping bail in May last year, Chand was wanted in over 40 cases of poaching and animal skin smuggling across five states.

It took a three-month Delhi police operation to catch him. First, the police identified places where Chand had stayed earlier, where he had properties and where his associates had been arrested. Then, a raid on a hideout in Sadar last month provided the police with a curious lead: clippings from a Rajasthan daily and five Hindi newspapers.

These suggested that Chand was reading these six newspapers every day. "The reason, it seemed, was that he wanted a continuous update on a bail case regarding his jailed first wife and son," said Delhi police commissioner K.K. Paul. "Also, he was following the developments in the Sariska case."

The police started a search for readers of the Rajasthan daily. "We received a tip that a man living at Patel Nagar was buying the newspaper regularly," said an officer.

The police kept a watch on all shops and hawkers in the area. On Wednesday, they noticed a beggar handing over a piece of paper to a roadside vendor with the names of some newspapers written on it. The beggar then took the newspapers to a temple and the policemen waited outside, but they failed to nab their man.

On Thursday morning, the beggar again went up to the vendor, collected the newspapers and disappeared into the temple. A couple of minutes later, a boy emerged from the temple with the newspapers. The cops followed the boy who went inside a house.

The police were on the right track this time. They found their man inside — Sansar Chand was offering his morning prayers. Later, the police also detained Sansar's landlord Kushal, a railway employee.

The poacher had given his neighbours the impression that he managed tea estates in Assam. "At times, he even gifted us varieties of tea leaves. But it did not taste nice," said one of the neighbours.

Sansar will be produced in court on Friday.