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BEST IN DESIGN

Mighty Megi hits

Super typhoon Megi smashed into the northern Philippines, causing landslides and killing at least one person.
World, P5



Where will Rooney go?

Speculation is rife that England striker Wayne Rooney is leaving Old Trafford.
Sports, P14

Eye on inflation

Finance Minister Korn Chatikavanij says inflation and international reserves remain the government's priorities to maintain economic sustainability.
Business, B1

Damming the flow

Flows of capital towards Asia require swift action and cooperation, the International Monetary Fund head says.
Business, B5

Motosai medics

Motorcycle taxi drivers get first-aid training.
Outlook, 01



Rescue workers and soldiers use a long rope yesterday to evacuate flood victims from Maharat Hospital on Chang Puek Road in Nakhon Ratchasima's Muang district as floodwaters inundate the hospital. SAROT MEKSOPHAWANNAKUL

PRASIT TANGPRASERT
SAROT MEKSOPHAWANNAKUL
APINYA WIPATAYOTIN

Nakhon Ratchasima and its provincial capital have been ravaged as flash floods wreak havoc in the Northeast and Central Plains following heavy weekend monsoon rains.

Swirling currents which swept through the province's Muang district have crippled government and private businesses and forced hospitals to close.

Troops, police and volunteers worked frantically yesterday to help rescue residents trapped in their homes, their operations hampered by strong currents and high waters.

The flooding is most critical in Pak Thong Chai and Muang districts. Five people have been killed in Korat. One person was found dead in Pak Chong district, two in Sung Noen and two in Dan Khun Tho, officials said.

USEFUL NUMBERS

■ Highways Hotline (24 hours): 1586
■ Flood Information Line: 02-354-6551
■ Highways Police: 1193
■ Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department Hotline: 1784

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva yesterday inspected the situation in Nakhon Ratchasima municipality.

Locals asked him to speed up distribution of survival kits as relief operations have not reached many areas.

"Prime Minister, bring us food and sandbags," villagers shouted as Mr Abhisit's boat passed their homes.

Heavy military trucks and flat-bottom boats were used to evacuate people from flooded areas and deliver food and water to affected communities.

Most roads in the provincial town were under water. Many cars and pickup trucks were submerged and left on the street because their owners were unable to move them to higher ground before the deluge hit.

"I've never seen a flood disaster this big in my entire life. I remember there was a big flood in 1959, but that was much less devastating than this one," said a woman in her 50s as a rescue worker evacuated her mother from their flooded home in Muang Nakhon Nayok municipality to safety.

Before the rescue unit arrived, residents joined forces to help each other. Men carried the young and old on their backs to safety through the swirling currents.

Other villagers struggled desperately to retrieve their belongings from the surging waters.

"Please help me build a [flood] barrier," a woman who owns a sports

equipment shop in the municipality asked a journalist as she tried to create a wall of sandbags in front of her shop.

"I've lost everything now," she said. Nakhon Ratchasima governor Rapee Pongbupakkit said 21 of the province's 32 districts had been inundated and declared disaster zones.

The floods yesterday hit three hospitals in the province, leaving thousands of staff, patients and visitors stranded on the higher floors.

At Maharat Hospital in Muang district, the floodwaters in the hospital were about 1.5 metres high yesterday afternoon.

The hospital was ill-prepared for the inundation and the bodies of six patients who had died and were being kept on the ground floor were seen floating in the mortuary.

The hospital has set up a temporary service centre outside the hospital to serve patients and relatives.

About 250 patients at the nearby Psychiatric Nakhon Ratchasima Ratchanakharin Hospital fled to higher floors after the ground floor was flooded.

At St Mary's Hospital off Mittraphap Road, the ground floor was also flooded. All hospital staff, patients and their relatives were stranded.

Officials said about 6,000 people were trapped at Maharat and St Mary's hospitals. They asked for donations of food, drinking water and other essential items for those trapped.

Affected villagers say what is most needed is cooked rice as they have no electricity or cooking utensils. Many villagers want sandbags to try to block floodwaters from entering their homes.

Cost of damage mounts up: Page B1
Photo gallery at www.bangkokpost.com

JUSTICE

Court secretary sacked over video footage scandal

MANOP THIP-OSOD

Pasit Sakdanarong has been dismissed as secretary to the president of the Constitution Court pending an inquiry into a controversy over video footage which the Democrat Party alleges is part of a plot to destroy the party's reputation.

Five Constitution Court judges — Udomsak Nitimontri, Jarun Pukditanakul, Supoj Khaimuk, Boonsong Kulbuppa and Jaroon Intacharn — yesterday held a news conference to explain the video footage allegedly showing



Pasit: Accused of undermining court

Court, which is hearing the case in which the ruling party is accused of misusing

a party development fund from the Election Commission.

The president of the Constitution Court, Chat Cholaeworn, thus decided to dismiss Mr Pasit as his secretary, effective immediately.

The move is intended to show the judges had nothing to do with the controversy, Mr Udomsak said.

He said the court would launch an internal investigation into the matter to uncover the truth.

"The court feels the need to investigate the issue as this could ruin the court's

image, so it is necessary to issue an order to dismiss [Mr Pasit]," Mr Udomsak said. Progress in the inquiry will be made known to the public, he said.

The opposition Puea Thai Party on Sunday released the footage which it says shows the Democrat Party attempting to influence the court ruling on the party development funds case.


The Democrat Party could be disbanded and its executives banned from politics for five years if found guilty.

Puea Thai spokesman Prompong Nopparit played the video footage to

reporters and said one clip showed Mr Wirat talking with Mr Pasit.

The clip, able to be accessed on YouTube at ohmygod3009, shows three people. One appears to be Mr Wirat allegedly asking for the help of Mr Pasit to persuade members of the Election Commission, in particular its chairman and political party registrar Apichart Sukhaggonond, to testify in court in favour of the ruling party.

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