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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010 ♦ 30 BAHT

Hundreds await rescue in Korat

11 killed, 1 missing in floods sweeping nation

POST REPORTERS

Hundreds of villagers in Nakhon Ratchasima remain without help despite authorities stepping up relief efforts to cope with the devastating and deadly flooding now ravaging more areas of the Northeast and Central Plains.

The deputy director-general of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Chatpong Chatphuti, said yesterday 11 people had been killed and one person was missing from Oct 10 to 19 in the floods sweeping across the country.

The death toll stands at four in Buri Ram, three in Nakhon Ratchasima, two in Lop Buri and one each in Rayong and Trat. The missing person was reported in Nakhon Ratchasima.

Although floods in central Nakhon Ratchasima have begun to recede in some areas, the water level yesterday was still very high in many communities, hindering aid efforts by state officials and volunteers.

In Pak Thong Chai town, one of the hardest-hit areas, strong currents have prevented officials from making door-to-door visits to provide help. Most locals were in dire need of supplies such as canned food, instant noodles and drinking water.

Many resorted to swimming or wading through the flood waters to get help.

A group of Border Patrol Police officers who arrived on board a flat-bottomed boat loaded with food and drinking water received a rapturous reception from residents.

"You are the first group to visit us today," said Sopha Thangprom, 53, the owner of a beauty shop who was waiting for help on the second floor of her home. "This is the worst trouble I've experienced in my life. The last flood many years ago wasn't so bad."

Other people yelled for help. Some jumped from their homes into the swirling waters and swam to pick up supplies from the police officers.

Outside of Pak Thong Chai town, hundreds more people in 16 tambons remained stranded on the upper floors

of their badly flooded homes and were still awaiting help yesterday.

Government troops who were running relief operations in the area complained about the difficulty of getting help to people.

"We can't get our men to some remote flooded villages because of the strong currents," said Master Sgt Santipong Puengtasang of the Suranaree Military Camp, who oversees flood relief operations.

"We have told village chairmen to send representatives to receive food and water on the main streets where our military trucks and flat-bottomed boats can go."

Master Sgt Santipong said the flood waters in the district had surged to two to three metres high in some areas after nearby Lampraploeng Dam released excess water downstream.

The water level in the district would begin to fall in the next few days, barring further rain, he said.

Officials said severe flooding continued yesterday in Nakhon Ratchasima's Muang and Dan Khun Thot districts.

Chaiyaphum is another northeastern province suffering heavy floods while in the Central Plains run off has been flowing through Ayutthaya and arriving at the outskirts of Bangkok.

The overflow of water in Chaiyaphum from the Lam Pa Thao Dam ravaged 25 communities in Muang district. More than 20,000 houses have been hit by the province's worst floods in three decades and water levels there range from 90 centimetres to 2.5 metres.

The floods were 1.5 metres deep at Chaiyaphum Hospital and workers were trying to build temporary flood walls to withstand the rising water and pump it out. The heart of Chaiyaphum is impassable to all vehicles.

Chaiyaphum governor Jarin Chakkapak said his province needed many more flat-bottomed boats to get food and other necessities to people and they had to be motorised because of the strong currents.

Parts of Buri Ram were also badly flooded.

In the Central Plains, floods battered Muang, Tha Wung and Ban Mi districts of Lop Buri, Tha Tako district of Nakhon Sawan, and Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya in Ayutthaya.

Run off from the Chao Phraya basin is approaching Pathum Thani immediately to the north of Bangkok.

Severe floods in Prachin Buri have affected Kabin Buri district and water will reach the heart of the province in the next few days.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva was at the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation yesterday for a video conference with provincial governors to follow up on the floods. He promised to streamline funding for flood-affected areas.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Theera Wongsamut said floods had ravaged 24 provinces, damaged more than 1.6 million rai (over 2,560 square kilometres) of farmland and affected about 150,000 farmers.

The damaged farmland includes about 960,000 rai of paddy fields.

Flooding in August and September hit 53 provinces and damaged about 2.7 million rai of farmland including about 2.4 million rai of paddy fields. About 290,000 farmers were affected.

With deluge comes disease: Page 2
Worry at flood crop impact: Page B1



A military helicopter drops relief supplies to a flooded village in Nakhon Ratchasima's Pak Thong Chai district, which still cannot be reached by vehicle. SAROT MEKSOPHAWANAKUL

FLOOD RISK AREAS

Flood barriers erected by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration along the Chao Phraya River, Bangkok Noi area and Mahasawardi canal will prevent flooding up to 2.5 metres above mean sea level.

Twenty-seven communities outside the barriers are still at risk of flooding. Fifteen other areas are also expected to experience flooding if the rainfall exceeds 60mm. The 15 areas are:

- 1 Chan Road, St Louis Road
- 2 Phahon Yothin Road: Khlong Sam Sen-Khlong Bang Sue
- 3 Sukhumvit Road: Khlong Phra Khanong - Soi Lasalle
- 4 Sukhumvit Road: Soi 39-49
- 5 Lat Phrao Road: Khlong Lat Phrao-The Mall
- 6 Navamin Road's Khlong Don Eka-Prasert Manukit Road
- 7 Ratchadaphisek Road: Robinson's Store
- 8 Lat Phrao intersection to Chatuchak market
- 9 Phetchaburi Road: Banthadthong - Ratchathewi intersections
- 10 Nikhom Makkasan Road
- 11 Rama VI Road
- 12 Soi Phetkasem 69
- 13 Yen Akat Road-Nang Linchi
- 14 Srinakarin Road: Khlong Tasad-Khlong Tachang
- 15 Sanam Chai Road and Maharat Road



Note: The Nong Chok, Klong Sam Wa and Lat Krabang districts are also at risk of flooding if runoff arrives from Pathum Thani and Nakhon Nayok provinces.

City residents learn to live with floods

SUPOJ WANCHAROEN

The Khiew Khai Ka community, part of Bangkok lying outside the protection of the city's flood walls, has been inundated for a month.

"We are in for chronic flooding. The water level varies, but I can tell you that we have battled floods here for the past month," community leader Somsak Sae Han said yesterday.

Khiew Khai Ka, in Dusit district, is one of 27 communities scattered across 13 districts of the capital which are outside the 77km flood dyke erected by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) along the Chao Phraya River.

The embankment walls along the river can hold water at a height of 2.5 metres above mean sea level.

"We have evacuated our belongings to higher ground. From what I can see, run off from the North is likely to reach us in three days," he said.

Mr Somsak urged authorities to take care about the help they send flood-stricken residents.

"Food arrives every year, of course, but not all of it is fit to eat. We have to be sure it isn't gnawed by rats," he said. Resident Nopporn Samrit said a new walkway would help, as the existing one was under water.

Medicines to treat flood-induced diseases are also needed.

"Authorities inspect the community

during the floods but it is more of a publicity stunt," he said.

Boonsom Somboon, who has lived in the community for more than 40 years, said flooding was a fact of life.

With many home toilets flooded, residents have no choice but to visit public conveniences or wait until they get to work.

"Some go to a nearby school, shopping malls or petrol stations to do their business. Those who can endure hold it until they get to the office," he said.

Most of the 27 communities encroach on public land by the river or nearby canals, which has prevented the BMA from building a dyke through them.

For those unprotected by the flood dyke, however, officials have piled sandbags to form makeshift flood walls, said Sanya Cheenimit, director of the Drainage and Sewerage Department.

Bangkok authorities are pinning their hopes on water gates and the flood walls to save the capital.

Mr Sanya said Bangkok's 214 water gates are closed to block overflows of water from the Chao Phraya River from entering the city's canals.

Officials are activating the capital's 157 pump stations.

They are watching out for possible floods as the arrival of run off from the North will coincide with high tides and torrential rains expected from Saturday until Wednesday.

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