

DISASTERS UPDATE

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TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

National

Fukushima-like disaster cannot happen in India: AEC Chairman

Raktima Bose, **The Hindu**, Thursday, Jun 30, 2011



Srikumar Banerjee

Kolkata: Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Chairman Srikumar Banerjee on Wednesday ruled out a Fukushima-like nuclear plant disaster in India, saying the nuclear reactors in the country had a passive cooling system unlike the Fukushima Daiichi reactor and additional safety features were being installed in them.

Dr. Banerjee pointed out that taking lessons from the Fukushima disaster where the radioactive fuel rods became overheated as water could not be introduced into the reactor on time, additional flanging was being done in the country's reactors so that extra water could be pumped in to remove the decay heat generated by nuclear fuel.

The AEC chief was speaking on the sidelines of celebration of Statistics Day and the 118th birth anniversary of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, organised by the Indian Statistical Institute here.

He said that six independent committees were set up by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) to analyse the safety standards of all the reactors and submit regular recommendations.

“The NPCIL has set up four committees and the AERB and the BARC have set up a committee each to independently analyse the safety standards of different reactors...they have recommended additional safety features for the reactors according to their locations. Supplementary water cooling system and power supply are the two primary recommendations.”

Designs for reactors in India had to be done keeping in mind natural calamities such as flooding due to heavy rainfall, cloudburst or dam-break or even a 9/11 kind of terror attack.

“Except Narora, all other nuclear reactors in India are located in Seismic III zone, thus reducing chances of an earthquake. A tsunami protection wall has been built at the Kalpakkam reactor. The EPR [European Pressurised Reactor] proposed to be set up in Jaitapur is so designed that it can even withstand a commercial airliner crash.”

It was, however, possible that all designs would fall short in case of an unforeseen calamity and for that margins have to be evaluated and safety measures added to the reactors, Dr. Banerjee said.

With the new Trinamool Congress-led West Bengal government opposed to the setting up of a nuclear reactor at Haripur in Purba Medinipur district, Dr. Banerjee said the AEC had not yet approached the government over the issue.

“There has been no discussion at the government-level so far. Part of the geo-technical survey for the project is over. More than government approval, it is public acceptance of the project that matters,” he said.

Asked if the AEC was considering an alternative site for the project, he said geo-technical investigations by the site selection team were on at various other sites.

Several roads blocked due to landslides in Uttarakhand

The Hindu, Thursday, Jun 30, 2011

Dehra Dun: Hundreds of pilgrims were stranded on as several roads in Uttarakhand, including national highways leading to the shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath and Gangotri, were blocked by landslides triggered by heavy rain, official sources said on Wednesday.

The Rishikesh-Badrinath national highway was blocked just two km away from Badrinath shrine following landslides caused by heavy rain, they said, adding hundreds of pilgrims were stranded in the area.

Efforts are on to remove the debris from the highway. Border Road Organisation (BRO) personnel have been deployed to clear it and open the road for vehicular traffic.

The Rishikesh-Kedarnath national highway has also been blocked at Sirobagad due to landslides triggered by heavy rain. - **PTI**

Landslide due to rain disrupts vehicular traffic in Uttarakhand

News on AIR, Jun 30, 2:0 PM



In Uttarakhand intermittent wide spread rains have disrupted the vehicular traffic at various places due to road blocked following the landslides. It has also affected Chardham Yatra in Garhwal region.

As per reports numerous vehicles have been stranded at different areas of the state. AIR correspondent reports, wide spread rains has disrupted the Chardam Pilgrimage in the state.

Roads leading to shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamuntori have been blocked by landslides at some places stranding thousands of pilgrims.

Whereas Pithoragarh-Almora, Pithoragarh-Tanakpur and several other roads have been also blocked following the landslides.

The Border Road Organisation and the district administration have been working round the clock to clear the roads, but inclement weather has been creating problem to restore the traffic on the damaged roads.

Meanwhile in Pithoragarh an ITBP inspector was killed in rain related incident.

As per reports power supply and communication services have also paralysed in Chamoli and some other places due to heavy rain. According to Director Met department, Anand Sharma heavy rain may occur in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Nainital, Champawat and Almora in coming 24 hours.

Four die in rain related incidents in UP

Press Trust Of India

Lucknow, June 30, 2011

Four persons died in rain related incidents in the last 24 hours as moderate to heavy showers lashed major parts of Uttar Pradesh. Lal Bahadur Chauhan (35) and his 12-

year-old son Akash were killed and another person was injured after being struck by lightning in Suratpur village in Jaunpur district officials said in Lucknow.

Meanwhile, Mahendra Pratap (28) and Subhash Yadav (27) were killed after being hit by lightning in different parts of Jaunpur district, they said.

Mehrauni in Jhansi recorded the highest rainfall of 161 mm in the last 24 hours, followed by 124.8 mm in Hamirpur, Met department said.

Bareilly recorded 70 mm rainfall while Gorakhpur recorded 66.3 mm, they said.

Rise in malaria, dengue, chikungunya cases

Staff Reporter, **The Hindu**, Thursday, Jun 30, 2011

Preventions

- Mosquito repellents should be used
- Avoid unwanted items that gather around the living area and breed mosquitoes
- Removal of stagnant water from coolers, old tyres, pools, buckets, plastic containers etc.
- Places where water is stored should be cleaned and closed
- Children should wear protective clothing
- Windows can be closed at dawn and dusk to prevent mosquitoes from entering
- Observe dry day once a week

Things to do during treatment

- Adequate rest is mandatory
- Keep body hydrated by taking juice, soups, coconut water
- Children should consume easily digestible (semi-solid) food
- Personal hygiene should be taken care of
- No self medication. Take medicines only after seeking a physician's prescription
- Pregnant women should take complete bed rest
- Sponge bath in lukewarm to reduce fever

HYDERABAD: The present climate in the capital and other parts of the State is known to trigger cases of malaria, dengue and chikungunya. The capital has already registered 142 cases of malaria till June, one unconfirmed case of dengue and four confirmed cases of chikungunya from districts.

Despite the threat of a surge in cases of these ailments during monsoons, doctors maintain that they are preventable.

A few changes in the lifestyle, surroundings and easy precautions should be taken to avoid these ailments during the upcoming rainy season, general physicians suggest.

All the three ailments are vector-borne and are linked with mosquito control measures. “Mosquitoes could be hidden and breeding in your air-conditioners, coolers, flower pots, vases, discarded tyres and even utensils in the kitchen. Families with children must be cautious because dengue could sometimes be life threatening,” said District Medical Officer, Hyderabad, Dr. B.L. Veena Kumari.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne infection and has symptoms like abrupt onset of high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains and rashes. Infants and young children may have high fever and rashes due to dengue.

Doctors maintained that dengue and chikungunya have almost the same symptoms.

“The only major difference is chikungunya patients suffer from severe pain of joints. Public should be wary of mosquitoes because dengue hemorrhagic fever could be fatal. Malaria and chikungunya can be managed,” says DMO Ranga Reddy, Dr. Ch. Jaya Kumari.

General physicians also point out that lifestyle changes is a key factor for prevention. “These ailments are not confined anymore to slums. They are all pervading and families should make it a point to observe dry day at least once in a week.

They should empty everything that holds water on that day,” doctors suggest.

International

Lightning kills 22 students, 1 teacher in Uganda

Associated Press

Kampala, June 30, 2011

Ugandan officials say 22 students and a teacher died after lightning struck their school in the country's midwest. Local police spokeswoman Zura Ganyana said on Wednesday that 51 students between the ages of 7 and 16 were injured yesterday. She said the teacher who died was visiting the Runyanya primary school, about 160 miles (some 260 kilometers) west of Uganda's capital.

Zombo education official John Ojobi says another school 200 miles (some 320 kilometers) northwest of Kampala was also hit by lightning on Tuesday, injuring 37 students and two teachers.

Meteorology experts say school buildings are being hit because they don't have lightning conductors and are built on high ground.

In the past few weeks, lightning strikes around the country have killed at least 38 people.

Wildfire edges closer to US nuke lab

AP | Jun 30, 2011, 02:09am IST

LOS ALAMOS: A [wildfire](#) near the desert birthplace of the atomic bomb advanced on the [Los Alamos laboratory](#) and thousands of outdoor drums of plutonium-contaminated waste as authorities stepped up efforts to protect the site and monitor the air for radiation.

Officials at the premier US nuclear-weapons lab gave assurances that dangerous materials were safely stored and capable of withstanding flames from the 95-square-mile fire, which at one point was as close as 50 feet from the grounds.

Residents downwind are worried about the potential of a radioactive smoke plume if the flames reach thousands of barrels of waste stored in above-ground tents.

"If it gets to this contamination, it's over — not just for Los Alamos, but for Santa Fe and all of us in between," said Mai Ting, a resident who lives in the valley below the desert mesas that are home to the [Los Alamos National Laboratory](#).

Chris Valverde, a resident of the [Santa Clara](#) Pueblo about 10 miles north of Los Alamos, questioned officials at a briefing Tuesday evening, asking whether they had evacuation plans for his community. Los Alamos, a town of 11,000, already sits empty after its residents were evacuated ahead of the blaze, which started Sunday.

"I know it's the worse scenario to think of," Valverde said. "But when the radiation leaks, are we prepared to get 2,000 people out?"

25 killed in Philippines flash flood

News on AIR, Jun 30, 11:36 AM

In Philippines at least 25 people were killed and 15 others missing following flash flood triggered by heavy rain. Officials said that the downpour drenched large parts of Davao city on the southern island of Mindanao on Tuesday night, causing the Matina river to rise and flood its banks.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said in a statement Davao City experienced the highest level of floodwaters reaching up to three metres.

Military rescuers have so far recovered 25 corpses after most of the floodwaters subsided on Wednesday.

Magnitude 5.4 quake hits central Japan

Reuters

Tokyo, June 30, 2011

A magnitude 5.4 earthquake hit central Japan and injured seven people on Thursday, but there were no immediate reports of major damage. The epicentre of the earthquake, which struck around 8:16 a.m. (2316 GMT on Wednesday) was in Nagano prefecture, about 120 km from Tokyo, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. No tsunami warning was issued after the quake, the agency said.

The magnitude was revised down from a preliminary reading of 5.5.

Seven people were taken to hospital including those hurt from falling objects, but the injuries did not appear serious, an official at the local fire department said.

Japan accounts for about 20% of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater.

On March 11, the northeast coast was struck by a magnitude 9 earthquake, the strongest quake in Japan on record, and a massive tsunami, which triggered the world's worst nuclear crisis in 25 years, at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The disaster left up to 23,000 dead or missing.

Moderate 5.5 quake rumbles off Chile's coast: USGS

Agence France-Presse

Washington, June 29, 2011

A moderate 5.5-magnitude earthquake rumbled off Chile's coast early today, according to the US Geological Survey, which did not issue a tsunami warning. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, but the country has been on edge since a devastating 8.8-magnitude quake last year that unleashed a tsunami and killed more than 500 people. Today's earthquake took place 59 miles (94 kilometres) southwest of the port city of Valparaiso and 85 miles (136 kilometers) west of the capital Santiago, according to the USGS.

5.6-magnitude quake hits off Indonesia's Sumatra island

AFP | Jun 29, 2011, 01.28pm IST

JAKARTA: A moderate 5.6-magnitude [earthquake](#) hit off Indonesia's [Sumatra island](#) on Wednesday, the local geophysics agency said, but there were no initial reports of damage or casualties.

The quake struck at a depth of 30 kilometres around 175 kilometres southwest of the city of Bengkulu at 11.19am (local time).

"So far we haven't received any information if there is an impact or damages from the quake. The quake is located quite far from Bengkulu," National Quake Centre official Bayu Pranata said.

[Indonesia](#) sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where the meeting of continental plates causes high seismic activity, and Sumatra is particularly prone to earthquakes.

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