

Italy evacuates thousands as rivers flood area towns

PIACENZA, Italy (AP) — Italy hurried more than 15,000 people from the path of two raging rivers Tuesday as flood waters that wreaked death in Alpine towns bore down on the medieval villages and cities of the northern Italian plains.

The death toll in Italy and Switzerland rose to 25, with the mud-caked bodies of a 1-year-old Italian boy and a woman believed to be his mother among the latest uncovered. A total of 21 people in the two countries were missing and feared dead.

On Tuesday, emergency crews evacuated whole villages in the paths of the Po, Italy's longest river, and the Ticino, which feeds into it from the Alps.

"Even those who were reluctant to leave their homes, like the elderly, eventually were convinced," said the Rev. Pier Luigi Rossi, one of a

few people still in the riverside village of San Rocco al Porto on Tuesday afternoon.

Water was climbing within inches of the sandbags newly lining the Po, a few steps from Rossi's church. He too was leaving soon.

The Po already had burst its banks at some points. By Tuesday night, the flood crest was passing the old trade town of Piacenza, home to columned Romanesque churches and a Botticelli painting.

The Po divides the rich agricultural regions of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, emptying into the lagoons of Venice. Tuesday, it hit its highest level in at least a half-century; its height at Piacenza was the highest ever recorded there.

While there has been some flooding of churches, where much of Italy's cultural patrimony is cached, the water generally has not yet threatened works of art, said Vincenzo Pandolfino of the Culture Ministry's art protection squad. Damage to Italy's countless masterpieces was not expected to near that suffered by Florence in a ruinous 1966 flood.

In both countries, however, authorities said overall damage would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Flooding forced Fiat, the auto giant, to shut down two of its biggest plants in its hometown of Turin. Blocked roads and railways and inundated factories made it impossible for suppliers to deliver parts, spokesman Franco Sodano said.

Officials were thinking of opening upstream dikes to ease the threat

to communities downstream, said Public Works Minister Nerio Nesi.

"We are in a state of anxiety, of high emergency," Nesi told reporters, adding, "The situation now could become very dangerous."

Along the Ticino, water lapped at the third floors of evacuated palazzos in the Roman-era Lombard town of Pavia. Firefighters ferried food and clean water to the few holdouts who refused to leave.

The floods and landslides started Saturday in southern Switzerland and northern Italy after days of pounding rain. Flood water roaring out of the Alps brought Lake Maggiore on the Swiss-Italian border to its highest level in 160 years.

Most of the deaths came over the weekend when mud, rock and water rushed through villages and towns, sweeping away even massive stone houses.

In the Swiss village of Gondo, perched in the Alps above the Italian border, rescuers digging through mud and rock found only bodies Tuesday.

Hopes faded for the 10 people still missing in Switzerland. Jean-Rene Fournier, president of the Valais canton (state) government, said it now appeared that a body recovered Monday in Gondo was that of a woman whom rescuers had heard faintly tapping just hours before.

With roads to Switzerland's famed ski resort of Zermatt blocked, authorities used helicopters to fly out stranded tourists. Seven-hundred had left by late Tuesday; 1,000 more were on a waiting list.



Philippine president maintains innocence of corruption claims

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — President Joseph Estrada faced the most serious threat to his presidency Tuesday as one-time allies — business, political and religious — delivered a unified message: step aside.

Estrada again maintained he was innocent of corruption, denying he received "even a centavo" of the \$14.4 million in illegal gambling money and tobacco taxes he is accused of pocketing.

"I have been convicted without a trial," the president complained.

But the accusations already have had a devastating effect on the Philippines' faltering economy. And impeachment proceedings could jeopardize democracy in the Philippines, former President Corason Aquino said.

The peso plunged to a record low and the stock market dropped to its lowest point in two years Monday. The central bank has had to sharply raise interest rates, threatening growth in an economy that is already one of the slowest in Southeast Asia, four leading business groups said.

The "crisis of leadership" has seriously undermined investor confidence, the business groups said Tuesday, urging Estrada to step down to avert economic disaster.

The corruption allegations surfaced when provincial Gov. Luis Singson, once a close friend of Estrada's, testified last week that he arranged payoffs of \$8.6 million

from illegal gambling and another \$2.8 million from tobacco taxes.

Singson said he decided to step forward about the payoffs after Estrada awarded the franchise for a legalized form of the numbers game jueteng to Singson's political rival.

For the sake of democracy, Estrada should step aside until the allegations are resolved, political and religious leaders said.

Aquino wore yellow — symbol of the "people power" revolt she led against ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 — to call on Estrada to resign or take a leave of absence.

"No government can continue with such charges hanging over its head," she said.

Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin joined her at a shrine commemorating the 1986 revolt to repeat his advice to Estrada to step aside.


"May God show him the heroic value of relinquishing his post for the sake of our people," he said Tuesday.

Opposition lawmakers and citizen's groups said they planned to file a formal impeachment proceedings against the president Wednesday in the House of Representatives.

Estrada — whose party holds large majorities in both houses of Congress — welcomed the action, saying impeachment proceedings would vindicate him.


"I have been convicted out of trial."

— Joseph Estrada
Philippine president




AIE
ADVOCATE IN EDUCATION

And



THE VICTORIA ADVOCATE
Presents



JUNIOR BROWN
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
JACK INGRAM
OCTOBER 28, 2000
8:30 P.M.
AT THE VICTORIA AIRPORT HANGAR
Doors Open at 7:30 p.m.
\$20⁰⁰

Ticket Locations:
JR's Boots, Victoria Communications Service,
The Victoria Advocate, or At The Door.
For more info (361) 574-1287
Food and Beer Available

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Nation's leading Home Builder and Fortune 500 Pulte Corporation (NYSE) seeks successful professionals to contribute to the growth of its Texas Divisions (Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Austin).

Career available in construction management. Qualifications: 4 year college degree and/or prior construction/warranty management experience; strong work ethic and sense of responsibility; initiative, commitment to quality; strong organizational skills; ability to execute a multitude of tasks, and high degree of honesty and integrity.


Our fast-paced, high-energy environment requires 100% commitment and offers career growth commensurate with performance. If you wish to join our entrepreneurial group of professionals committed to continuous improvement and the maintenance of our industry leadership position, please sign up for the following:

Information Session*:	November 16, 2000
On-Campus Interviews*:	November 17, 2000

*Contact Career Center @409-845-5139 for details.

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS AT WWW.SKILLSCAPE.COM/PULTE, JOB REFERENCE NUMBER SK127.

Personnel Administrator
Pulte Homes of Texas, L.P.
Houston Division
fax (281) 749-8001
www.pulte.com



EOE/AA Employer

The Battalion Online offers access to The WIRE
A 24-hour, multimedia news service for the Internet from The Associated Press



The WIRE provides continuously updated news coverage from one of the world's oldest, largest news services via The Battalion's web page.

- * A comprehensive, up-to-the-minute news report combining the latest AP stories with photos, graphics, sound and video.
- * Headlines and bulletins delivered as soon as news breaks.
- * Scrolling tickers for market prices and sports scores

<http://battalion.tamu.edu>

join the cast of the real world.

You even get to decide where you're going to live. With CareerBuilder's On Campus channel you have an insightful resource designed specifically for college students where you'll find the best jobs, company research, a resume database and advice from recent grads. And Mega Job SearchSM allows you to search over 50 career sites with just one click. All so you can be what you want, where you want, right from the start.

careerbuilder.com
when is your future?™