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Amur Region Set For Mass Evacuations as Power Plants Endangered

By The Moscow Times

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Thousands more people may have to be evacuated from their homes in the flood-hit Amur region as water levels continue to rise, threatening two major hydroelectric power stations, a news report said Friday.

To prevent the Bureyskaya and Zeya plants from being destroyed, huge volumes of excess water need to be released, which could flood many of the region's villages, Kommersant reported.

"We need to be prepared for the worst case scenario. ... The discharge of the Bureyskaya plant has already begun. It will lead to flooding of a number of villages which are located on the Bureya and the lower reaches of the Amur River. It is necessary to begin a mass evacuation of the population," the region's governor, Oleg Kozhemyako, said at a conference Thursday night.

Torrential rainfall began in the region in late July, causing water levels in local rivers to rise dramatically, including in the Zeya, a major tributary of the Amur River.

By Aug. 15, over 4,000 homes succumbed to flooding in the region and 13,500 people were evacuated from their homes. The authorities estimate that more than 3 billion rubles ($91 million) of damage has been caused.

States of emergency have also been declared in the Primorye and Khabarovsk regions, the republic of Sakha and the Jewish autonomous region.

The worst is yet to come, however, as the floods are expected to peak on Aug. 17 and 18, according to forecasts.

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