

Sherpa guide missing on Everest, presumed dead

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Lama Babu Sherpa reached the summit with a team of climbers and other guides on Monday, but became separated from the group as they descended and has not been seen since.

A government official at Everest base camp confirmed that Lama was presumed dead.

"Climbers found his clothes and other belongings but not the body," Gyanendra Shrestha, a government liaison officer, told AFP.

"He has been missing for such a long time now, it would be near-impossible for him to survive."

Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, Lama's employers, said the team had been hit by strong winds as they reached the summit.

"The other sherpas were taking care of the members and they thought that he would come (down) but he didn't," he said.

Another team of climbers from the same mountaineering outfit reached the summit on Wednesday and looked for the missing guide on their descent.

"They searched in the summit area but they couldn't find his body," Mingma said, adding there was no way Lama could survive three nights exposed on the mountain.

Around 100 people have reached the summit of Everest this week as the busy spring climbing season—which runs from April to May—got into full swing.

Nearly 350 climbers have paid for permits to climb Everest from the Nepal side this season. Another 180 are attempting from the northern side in Tibet.

Most ascend with at least one guide, doubling the overall number of climbers heading for the top.

Foreigners must pay \$11,000 for a permit but cut-price climbing outfits skimping on safety requirements have flourished in recent years, luring amateurs to the 8,848 metre (29,029 foot) peak.

The rapid growth in the climbing industry has accompanied complaints of overcrowding and fears that inexperienced mountaineers are putting themselves and their guides at risk.

Last year seven people lost their lives on Everest while nearly 570 made the summit, most ascending from Nepal.

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