

Evacuations, airport closure as Typhoon Kammuri hits Philippines

December 2 2019, by Ron Lopez



The storm is on track to then pass close to Manila, which is home to some 13 million people and the site for many of the SEA Games events

Typhoon Kammuri lashed the Philippines on Monday, forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of residents and the closure of Manila's

international airport as a safety precaution.

The storm made landfall at around 11:00 pm (1500 GMT) on Sorsogon, the southernmost province of Luzon island, the government weather service PAGASA said.

Luzon, the country's largest island, is home to some 49 million people.

The typhoon packed maximum sustained winds of up to 175 kilometres (110 miles) per hour and gusts of 240 kph after landfall, government meteorologists said.

The storm is forecast to pass to the south of the capital, which is hosting thousands of athletes for the regional Southeast Asian Games.

Officials at Manila's airport made the call to shut the facility once the storm's power was clear.

"Based on our estimate, it will be closed from 11:00 am to 11:00 pm tomorrow, December 3," said Ed Monreal, general manager of Manila's airport authority.

Nearly 70,000 people fled their homes in the southern Bicol region, disaster officials said.

However, some residents opted to stay put even as the storm began to strike.

"The wind is howling. Roofs are being torn off and I saw one roof flying," local Gladys Castillo Vidal told AFP.



The weather bureau also warned of rain-induced landslides and possible storm surges of up to three meters (10 feet)

"We decided to stay because our house is a two-storey made of concrete... Hopefully it can withstand the storm."

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, killing hundreds and putting people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty.

The country's deadliest cyclone on record was Super Typhoon Haiyan, which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

Games plagued by build-up woes

Kammuri already snarled some plans for the SEA Games featuring thousands of athletes from the region, which opened Saturday and is set to run through December 11 in and around Manila.

The windsurfing competition was halted as a precaution and triathlon events were held earlier than scheduled.

Ramon Suzara, the chief operating officer of the organising committee, said contingency plans were in place for bad weather, but the duration of the Games would not be extended.

"Everything is set," Suzara told reporters. "For contingency, all venues, all competition managers, technical delegates are ready."

Typhoon Kammuri



Source: HKO

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Map showing the path of Typhoon Kammuri as it heads towards the Philippines on Monday.

The storm is the latest trouble for the Games, which saw a series of transport hiccups and a rush of last-minute construction ahead of the opening ceremony.

This year's Games in Clark, Manila and Subic are already particularly complex, with competition in a record 56 sports at dozens of venues that are in some cases hours apart by car.

Around 8,750 athletes and team officials are expected at this year's 30th edition—the biggest ever—along with another 12,000 volunteers.

Organisers hope more than 500 million viewers will tune in on television by the end of the competition.

The Philippines have made a strong start to the Games, rising to the top of the medal table with over 70 in total, ahead of Vietnam in second place and Malaysia in third.

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Citation: Evacuations, airport closure as Typhoon Kammuri hits Philippines (2019, December 2) retrieved 16 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-12-evacuations-airport-closure-typhoon-kammuri.html>

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