

Death toll from heavy rain in north India rises to almost 60

August 14 2023



Intense rains have caused floods and landslides in India, killing at least 24 people.

At least 58 people were killed, nine of them in a temple collapse, and many more were feared missing after intense rains caused floods and

landslides in India, officials said Monday.

Days of torrential downpours have washed away vehicles, demolished buildings and destroyed bridges in the northern Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Flooding and landslides are common and cause widespread devastation during India's treacherous monsoon season, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

In Himachal Pradesh, 50 people were killed in the past 24 hours, up from an earlier official toll of 41. That included at least nine killed in the collapse of a Hindu temple in the state capital, Shimla.

"There is no previous record of such rains and more than 50 deaths in the state in a 24 hour period—and this toll can go up further, because there are still about 20 people under the rubble," chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu told local media late Monday.

"The local administration is diligently working to clear the debris in order to rescue individuals who may still be trapped," Sukhu said in a statement earlier in the evening.

At least eight others have also been killed since Friday in neighboring Uttarakhand state, officials said.

Images from hard-hit areas in Himachal Pradesh showed bodies being pulled out of piles of dark earth that had crushed buildings and smashed roofs.

Thousands of people have been stranded, with key roads, power lines and communication networks disrupted.

Railway lines were seen dangling in midair, with the ground beneath them washed away.



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'Disturbing'

Sukhu, who posted on social media a "disturbing" video of a raging torrent swamping roads, appealed to residents to stay indoors and avoid going near rivers.

Schools in the state had been shut, he said.

The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, said she was "hurt with the loss of lives in accidents because of heavy rains" and offered her condolences to the families who have suffered in Himachal Pradesh.

Rescue teams in Uttarakhand raced to remove debris after people were feared buried when heavy rainfall triggered landslides.

Five people were buried under the debris after a landslide hit a resort near the popular yoga retreat of Rishikesh on the banks of the river Ganges.

District police superintendent, Shweta Choubey, told AFP that a girl had been rescued from the site but that the rest of her family was still under the collapsed building.

Several riverside towns and villages in both states were at risk of flash floods from the heavy rain forecast in the region.

The monsoon brings South Asia around 80 percent of its annual rainfall and is vital for both agriculture and the livelihoods of millions. But it also brings destruction every year in the form of landslides and floods.

Days of relentless monsoon rains killed at least 90 people last month, while the capital New Delhi saw the Yamuna river—which snakes past the megacity—record its highest levels since 1978.

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