

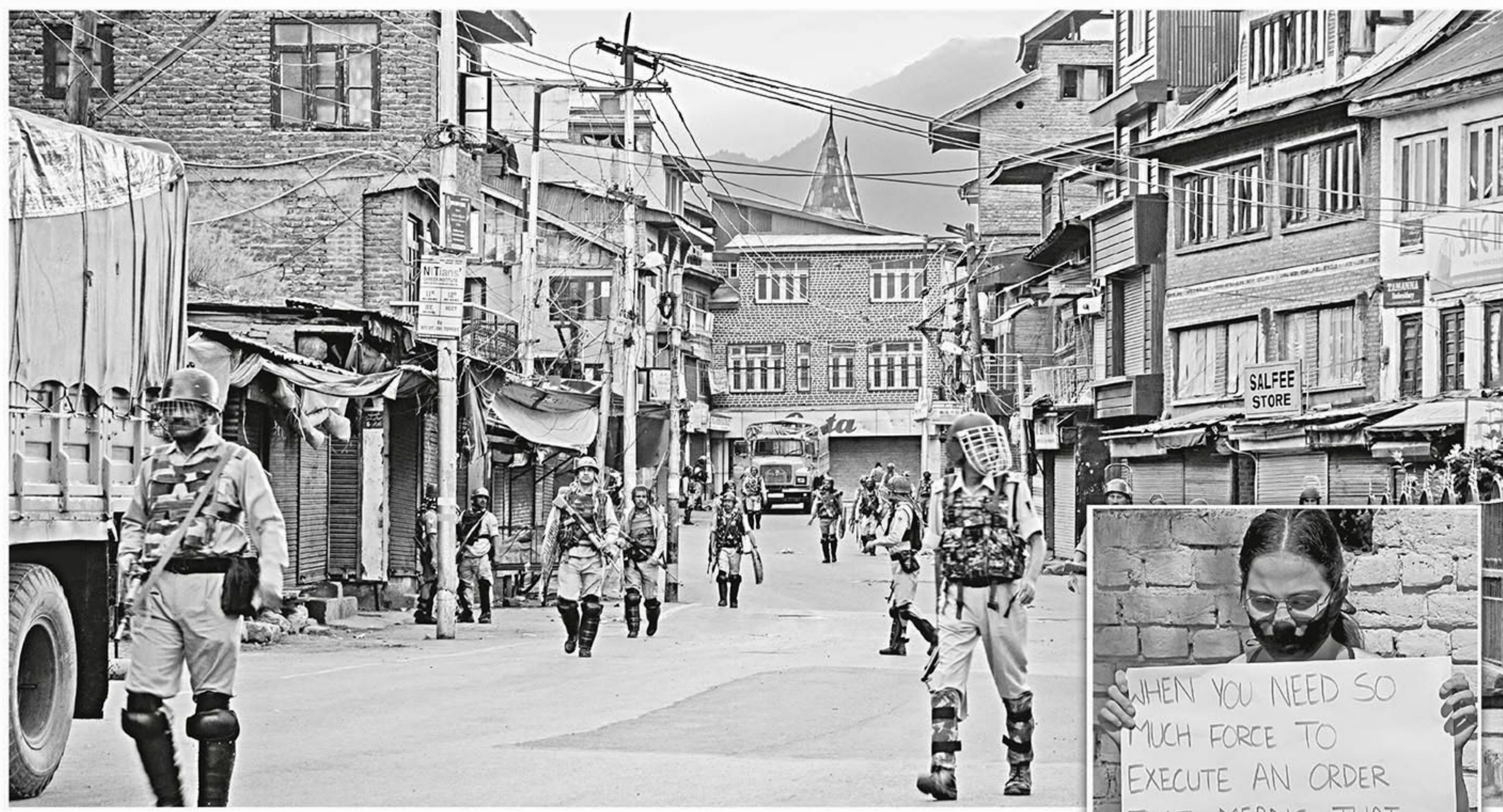
# Decision on Congress chief today: source

NDTV ONLINE

A new Congress president will be chosen when the party's top decision-making body meets today, sources said yesterday after a meeting at Sonia Gandhi's home. Mukul Wasnik has emerged as the front runner for the post left vacant after Rahul Gandhi quit in May, owning responsibility for the party's national election debacle.

A non-Gandhi may be party president for the first time in two decades as the Congress Working Committee meets today. 59-year-old Mukul Wasnik, a former minister with much administrative experience, is expected to take charge at least till the organizational elections.

In its 134-year history, India's oldest political party has mostly had a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family in charge. But at a time all three Gandhis are in politics, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have refused to be a part of the process. The Congress Working



Indian security personnel walk on a street in Srinagar yesterday, as widespread restrictions on movement and a telecommunications blackout remained in place after the Indian government stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its autonomy. *Inset*, An activist protests with a placard in New Delhi.

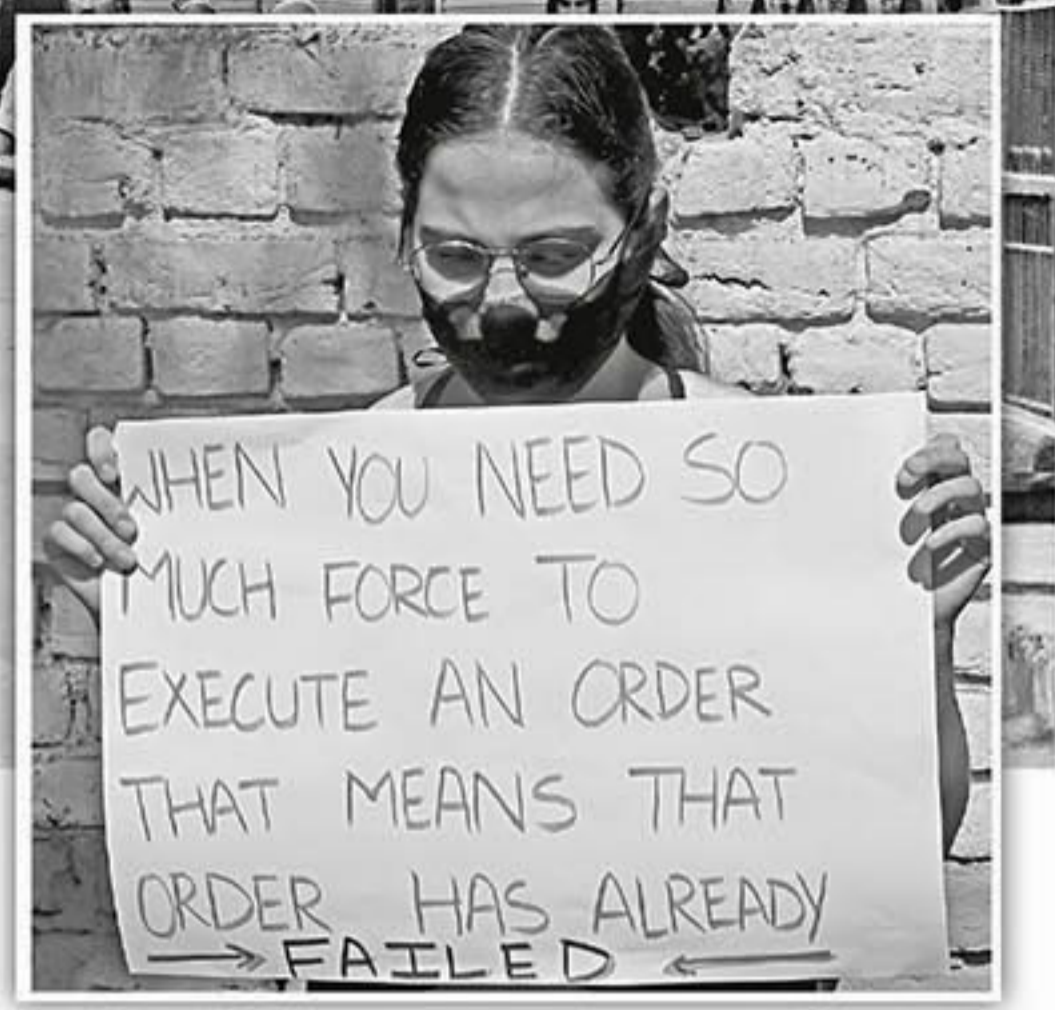


PHOTO: AFP

# 13 killed in Myanmar landslide

AFP, Yangon

A landslide caused by heavy monsoon rains killed at least 13 people and injured dozens more in eastern Myanmar, officials said yesterday, as floods forced tens of thousands across the country to flee their homes.

The deluge of mud engulfed 16 homes and a monastery early yesterday in Thae Pyar Kone village in Mon state, district administrator Myo Min Tun told AFP.

"Thirteen people have so far been found dead and 27 taken to hospital in Mawlamyine (Mon state's capital)," he told AFP by phone.

Torrential downpours have caused rivers to burst their banks across the country while coastal communities have been warned of looming high tides. Officials say at least 30,000 people, mainly in Bago region and Mon and Karen states, were seeking refuge from the floods, many in monasteries.

# J&K state assembly polls soon

Promises Modi, says region will be converted to full-fledged state again

REUTERS, New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the people of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday that elections would be held soon in the state for the local assembly, two days after government's decision to end special status for the state and split it into two union territories.

In an address broadcast on television and radio, the first time he has spoken to the nation on the decision, Modi painted the move as one that will benefit the people of Kashmir. The federal government would take steps to create more economic opportunities, he said.

This week's move, tightening New Delhi's grip on the contested region, withdrew the Muslim majority state's right to frame its own laws and allowed people from outside the region to buy property there.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir will be able to choose their leaders, their CMs (chief ministers) like they have done before," Modi said. He added that once the law-and-order

situation improves in the region, Jammu and Kashmir would again be converted into a full-fledged state.

Indian authorities have imposed a communications blackout on Kashmir for a fourth straight day, stopping media from being able to report what is happening there.

Modi said the government had



taken the decision to repeal Article 370 and 35A of the constitution for the overall development of the region. These legal provisions created hurdles to extending legal benefits to women, minorities and students that the rest of India provides, he said.

Introduced decades ago, the constitutional provisions provided

autonomy to the state authorities to limit the implementation of Indian laws as well as to keep people from other parts of the country from overrunning the state.

"I am confident that with Article 370 and 35A becoming a history, Jammu and Kashmir will come out of its negative effects," Modi said.

Modi said the decision to change the status of Kashmir would help government employees of Jammu and Kashmir get the benefits enjoyed by people of other federally administered territories.

He also exhorted large corporations, including information technology companies, to invest in the state and generate jobs for the people from the region, and promised to step up infrastructure projects in the region.

The Indian government's move has drawn a strong reaction from Pakistan, which has taken a series of steps to exert diplomatic pressure on its neighbour. Kashmir has been at the heart of 70 years of hostility between the countries.

# Pak court allows remand of Maryam Nawaz

REUTERS, Lahore

Some supporters of Pakistan's largest opposition party threw punches yesterday in clashes with police as a top leader, Maryam Nawaz, was remanded to custody on corruption charges filed by a national anti-graft agency.

Maryam, daughter of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and a scion of the family that dominated politics for three decades, was arrested over fraud accusations at a sugar mill her family runs, one of several cases it says are politically motivated.

"I knew that it would be a tough situation for me to launch a political struggle but I will not budge," Maryam told reporters shortly before she appeared in court in the city of Lahore, to be denied bail and remanded until August 21.

"The NAB has made a baseless case against me," she added, referring to Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau.

The anti-graft agency has arrested, or wants to arrest, about a dozen members

of the Sharif family, which runs the largest opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Some of the hundreds of party supporters gathered outside the court engaged in fistfights with police, according to eyewitnesses and video images. Police declined to comment on the extent of the clashes.

Maryam is one of the few opposition figures to openly criticise Prime Minister Imran Khan and Pakistan's powerful military, accusing them in recent weeks of censoring rallies and news conferences held by her party.

Maryam, who led big anti-government rallies across the country, disappeared from Pakistani media last month after she made public a secretly recorded video.

The video purported to show her father's graft conviction had been the result of blackmail. Reuters was not independently able to confirm the authenticity of the video.

Khan and the military deny any media ban on the party or that the cases against the family are politically motivated.



# Indigenous and women's rights can boost climate fight: UN

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Barcelona

Indigenous peoples said on Thursday that a United Nations report on climate change had for the first time recognised their land rights as important for curbing global warming.

The special report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), written by more than 100 scientists, called for big changes to land use, farming and eating habits to help cut emissions that are heating up the Earth.

"Finally, the world's top scientists recognise what we have always known," said indigenous leaders from 42 countries in a statement coordinated by the Rights and Resources Initiative, a U.S. based coalition promoting community-based forest ownership.

"Failure to legally recognise our rights leaves our forests vulnerable to environmentally destructive projects that devastate forests and release massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere."

The IPCC met this week in Geneva, Switzerland, to finalise the report, intended to guide governments tasked with implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit climate change.

Thursday's IPCC report called for wiser land use, including protecting forests from being cut down for crops and grazing, and eco-friendly farming that uses fewer chemicals, such as fertiliser which emits planet-warming nitrous oxide.

Indigenous people customarily own more than 50% of the world's lands, yet governments only recognise their ownership rights to 10%, they said.

"This gap between our legal and customary rights renders us and our lands vulnerable to the growing threats of agro-industrial production, destructive mining and logging practices, and large-scale infrastructure developments," they said.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation there had been "a betrayal" and lack of political will to protect indigenous people's land rights.

The IPCC also called for more support for poor farmers, particularly women, to limit the impacts of extreme weather and creeping deserts and enable them to feed their families.



In this photograph taken on Thursday, Indian Army personnel rescue people stranded in flood waters after heavy rains on the outskirts of Sangli in Maharashtra state.

PHOTO: AFP

# COMMUNICATIONS BLOCKADE IN KASHMIR

## Only 5 of 180 newspapers published

REUTERS, Srinagar

Kashmir has nearly 180 English and Urdu daily newspapers, but only five are publishing these days due to restrictions imposed by Indian authorities to prevent unrest after New Delhi revoked the state's autonomy.

That is frustrating for the region's journalists, many of whom are veterans of covering a long insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir and operating under prolonged curfews.

"This is the biggest story of our generation and we haven't been able to report it," said Faisal Yaseen, associate editor of Rising Kashmir, one of the handful of newspaper groups that is still publishing.

With phone lines and internet services suspended, six newspaper editors and journalists told Reuters they have no way to access wire reports or any outside online news sources, their district correspondents, and seek comment from government officials.

An Indian foreign ministry spokesman said there was no restriction on the press.

"Even in the worst of times, the press were given curfew passes," said Morifat Qadri, executive editor of the Daily Afaaq, which usually prints 4,000 copies daily.

"They don't want that anybody covers the current situation," he said.

# Trump says another meeting with Kim Jong Un possible

REUTERS, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday said he has received a "very beautiful letter" on Thursday from the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and added that he could have another meeting with him.

Speaking to reporters, Trump did not say when such a meeting would take place. North Korea has been testing missiles despite a June 30 meeting between Trump and Kim at which the two agreed to revive stalled working-level talks, which have yet to resume.

Trump and Kim have met three times since last year to discuss ways to resolve a crisis over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, but progress has been scant on Washington's aim of getting the North Korea leader to give up his weapons.

Trump also said that he agreed with Kim's opposition to US-South Korea war games.

"He wasn't happy with the war games," Trump said of Kim's letter, which Trump said explained why Pyongyang had been conducting missile tests.

"You know I've never liked it either,"

Trump said.

The recent missile tests have raised questions about the future of dialogue. Pyongyang has warned of a possible end to its freeze of nuclear and long-range missile tests in place since 2017. Trump has repeatedly pointed to that freeze as evidence of the success of more than a year of engagement with Kim.

Keen to tout his North Korea policy as a success ahead of his 2020 reelection bid, Trump has sought to play down the missile launches, saying they do not violate Kim's pledge to forego nuclear and long-range tests.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Wednesday he was hopeful talks would resume in coming and that the US side was planning for negotiations in a couple of weeks.

A summit between Trump and Kim in Hanoi in February collapsed over a failure to narrow differences over US demands for North Korea to give up all of its nuclear weapons and Pyongyang's demands for relief from punishing sanctions.



# FINANCIAL TERRORISM

## 8 charged in Rakhine

REUTERS, Yangon

A Myanmar court yesterday charged eight people with financing terrorism, including six deported from Singapore last month over allegations they had sent money to ethnic rebels in the conflict-torn Rakhine region.

Recently, civilians have been caught up in clashes between the military and the Arakan Army, an insurgent group that recruits from the mainly Buddhist ethnic Rakhine population and is fighting for greater autonomy for the state.

Myanmar has designated the Arakan Army a terrorist organization.

The Myanmar army has battled various autonomy-seeking ethnic minority insurgent groups for decades but several have agreed to make peace in recent years.

# Floods kill 22 in southern India

22,000 people displaced

REUTERS, Bengaluru/Mumbai

At least 22 people have died in the southern Indian state of Kerala after torrential monsoon rains caused landslides and flooding that cut off some areas, authorities said yesterday.

Seasonal monsoon rains from June to September cause deaths and mass displacement across South Asia every year but they also deliver more than 70% of India's rainfall and are crucial for farm output and economic growth.

In Kerala, the disaster forced the evacuation of more than 22,000 people and the closure of Cochin International Airport, the busiest airport in the tourist state.

Located along the banks of the Periyar river, the airport will be shut until at least 1500 IST (0930 GMT) on Sunday, although the Indian Navy has opened an airfield at a naval base for use by commercial flights, officials said.

Kerala was hit by devastating floods last August that killed more than 200 people and affected more than 5 million.

The western Indian states of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka have also been hit this week by heavy rains and flooding. Officials said at least 38 people have been killed in the states this week due to the rains and more than 200,000 have been evacuated.