

RAINS, FLOODING IN SOUTH KOREA

Death toll rises to 37

9 missing; rescuers struggle to reach more than 10 cars trapped in underground tunnel

AFP, Cheongju

Rescuers yesterday battled to reach people trapped in a flooded tunnel in South Korea, where at least 37 people have died and 9 are missing after heavy rains caused flooding and landslides.

South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, and there has been heavy rainfall for the last four days, causing a major dam to overflow.

The interior ministry reported that 37 people were killed and another nine were missing nationwide in the heavy downpours, mostly buried by landslides or after falling into a flooded reservoir.

Hundreds of rescue workers were still struggling to reach more than 10 cars and an unknown number of people trapped in a 430 metre (1,410 foot) underground tunnel in Cheongju, North Chungcheong province, the ministry said.

When AFP arrived at the site yesterday, rescue workers were trying to drain the tunnel to reach victims, but the water still appeared to be too deep, hampering search efforts.

The tunnel was inundated on Saturday

morning after floodwaters swept in too quickly for the vehicles inside to escape, according to the Yonhap.

Five people were rescued from a bus in the tunnel Saturday, and nine bodies have so far been pulled from the site, with divers working around the clock searching for more victims, the interior ministry said.

The police have received missing person reports for 11 people believed to be in the tunnel, but a final official toll has not yet been provided, as it is unclear how many people were in each car, Yonhap reported.

"I have no hope but I can't leave," a parent of one of those missing in the tunnel told Yonhap.

"My heart wrenches thinking how painful it must have been for my son in the cold water."

Images broadcast on local television showed a torrential stream of water from a nearby river that had burst its banks flooding into the tunnel, as rescue workers struggled to use boats to get to people inside.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol held an emergency meeting with his aides on the government's response, his office said.



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Congress backs AAP's fight against Delhi ordinance

NDTV ONLINE

After weeks of dithering, the India's opposition Congress party yesterday came out in support of the Aam Aadmi Party's campaign against the contentious central order that wrested back control of Delhi's bureaucracy, boosting the prospects of an opposition meeting set to be held a day later.

"I think they (AAP) are going to join the meeting tomorrow [today]. As for the ordinance (on control of services in Delhi), our stand is very clear. We are not going to support it," Congress general secretary KC Venugopal told PTI, days after the AAP said it won't join any such meeting till the Congress backs its stand on Delhi ordinance.

The AAP's top leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, yesterday convened to deliberate their course of action regarding participation in the two-day opposition gathering in Bengaluru.

Following the first opposition conclave in Patna on June 23 - a meet-and-greet for the splintered opposition parties to try and rally together against BJP in next year's national elections - the AAP had sharply criticised the Congress.

"The Congress' hesitation and refusal to act as a team player will make it very difficult for AAP to be a part of any alliance that includes the Congress," a statement from party read.

The central government's move on May 19, to issue the controversial ordinance, has been described as a "deception" by AAP government, a way to bypass a Supreme Court verdict which gave it the control of the capital's bureaucrats.



Migrants walk by a string of buoys placed on the water along the Rio Grande border with Mexico in Eagle Pass, Texas, US on Saturday, to prevent illegal immigration entry to the US. The buoy installation is part of an operation Texas is pursuing to secure its borders, but activists and some legislators say Governor Greg Abbott is exceeding his authority.

PHOTO: AFP



A firefighter stands on boulders covered with pink fire retardant while monitoring the Gavilan Fire, which has already burned more than 250 acres in Perris, Riverside County, California, US on Saturday. Brutally high temperatures threaten tens of millions of Americans, as numerous cities braced to break records under a relentless heat dome that has baked parts of the country all week.

PHOTO: AFP

'Heat storm' stretches into southern Europe

Italy issues red alerts for 16 cities; thousands evacuated as Spanish island wildfire out of control; China issues several temperature alerts

REUTERS, Rome

Italy issued hot weather red alerts for 16 cities yesterday, with meteorologists warning that temperatures will hit record highs across southern Europe in the coming days.

On the Spanish island of La Palma, meanwhile, at least 4,000 people had to be evacuated as a forest fire burned out of control, authorities said.

Spain, Italy and Greece have been experiencing scorching temperatures for several days already, damaging agriculture and leaving tourists scurrying for shade.

But a new anticyclone dubbed Charon, who in Greek mythology was the ferryman of the dead, pushed into the region from north Africa yesterday and could lift temperatures above 45 Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in parts of Italy early this week.

"We need to prepare for a severe heat storm that, day after day, will blanket the whole country," Italian weather news service Meteo.it warned yesterday.

"In some places ancient heat records will be broken."

Greece closed the ancient Acropolis during the hottest part of the day on Friday to protect tourists.

Italy's Health Minister Orazio Schillaci said authorities were keeping a close eye

on Rome and urged people to take care. "Going to the Colosseum when it is 43C (109.4F) is not advisable, especially for an elderly person," he told Il Messaggero newspaper yesterday, saying people should stay indoors during the hottest part of the day, between 11:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Besides the Italian capital, health alerts were in place from the central city of Florence to Palermo in Sicily and Bari, in the southeast of the peninsula.

In Spain, forecasters warned of the risk of forest fires and said that it would not be easy to sleep during the night, with temperatures unlikely to fall below 25C (77F) across the country.

The heatwave will intensify from today, with temperatures reaching 44C (111.2F) in the Guadalquivir valley near Seville in the south of the country, forecasters predicted.

Europe's highest recorded temperature of 48.8C (119.8F), registered in Sicily two years ago, could be exceeded in the coming days, notably on the Italian island of Sardinia, meteorologists have said.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the United States National Weather Service reported that a powerful heatwave stretching from California to Texas was expected to peak during an "extremely hot and dangerous

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