

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.

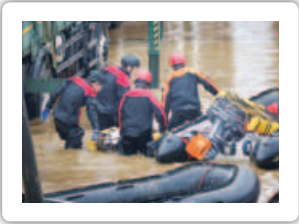
South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, and there has been heavy rainfall for the last four days, causing a major dam to overflow.

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.



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

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.

'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

weekend".

Arizona's state capital Phoenix recorded 16 straight days above 43C, with residents facing temperatures of 47C on Saturday.

California's Death Valley, often among the hottest places on Earth, was also likely to register new peaks yesterday, with the mercury possibly surpassing 54C.

Southern California is fighting numerous wildfires, including one in Riverside County that has burned more than 7,500 acres (3,000 hectares) and prompted evacuation orders.

Further north, the Canadian government said wildfires had burned a record-breaking 10 million hectares this year, with more damage expected as the summer drags on.

Despite the heat, parts of South Asia have also been battered by torrential rain.

In northern India, relentless monsoon rains have reportedly killed at least 90 people, following burning heat.

Major flooding and landslides are common during India's monsoons, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

China yesterday issued several temperature alerts, warning of 40-45C in the partly desert region of Xinjiang, and 39C in southern Guangxi region.

It can be difficult to attribute a particular weather event to climate change, but scientists insist that global warming - linked to dependence on fossil fuels - is behind the intensification of heatwaves.

The EU's climate monitoring service said the world saw its hottest June on record last month.

HIGH TEMPERATURES

Japan issues

heatstroke alerts

AFP, Tokyo

Japan yesterday issued heatstroke alerts to tens of millions of people as near-record high temperatures scorched swathes of the country, while torrential rain pummelled other regions.

National broadcaster NHK warned viewers that the heat was at life-threatening levels, as temperatures soared to nearly 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in some places, including the capital Tokyo. "Please stay hydrated and use air conditioners appropriately, and refrain from outings that seem difficult," a news presenter said. The government issued heatstroke alerts for 20 of the country's 47 prefectures.

US, China aim

to revive climate

cooperation

AFP, Beijing

US climate envoy John Kerry arrived in China yesterday, state media reported, to restart stalled talks between the world's two biggest emitters of planet-warming gases. Starting today, "China and the United States will have an in-depth exchange of views" on climate issues, state broadcaster CCTV said on Kerry's arrival in Beijing. Kerry's trip to China, where he will meet with his counterpart Xie Zhenhua, follows weeks of record-setting summer heat that scientists say is being exacerbated by climate change.

NORTH'S ICBM LAUNCH

US, S Korea, Japan

hold missile drill

REUTERS, Seoul

The US, South Korea and Japan held a joint naval missile defence exercise yesterday to counter North Korea's evolving nuclear and missile threats, the South's navy said, days after the North launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). North Korea fired its latest Hwasong-18 missile, which Pyongyang describes as the core of its nuclear strike force, off the east coast on Wednesday in what it said was a "strong practical warning" to the adversaries. Yesterday's trilateral drill was conducted in international waters between South Korea and Japan, bringing together destroyers equipped with Aegis radar systems from the three countries, the navy said.

New book claims

to reveal identity of

'Jack the Ripper'

AFP, London

The great-great-granddaughter of a police officer who investigated the "Jack the Ripper" murders in 19th century London believes she has uncovered the killer's true identity, the Sunday Telegraph reported. Sarah Bax Horton has written a book on her research into local cigar-maker Hyam Hyams, who she said closely matches witness descriptions from the time of a suspect seen with victims. The murders, which saw at least six women killed in East End of London in 1888, remain one of Britain's most notorious unsolved cases.



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

VEIL VIOLATIONS

Iranian police

relaunch

patrols

AFP, Tehran

Iranian police yesterday relaunched patrols to catch the increasing number of women leaving their hair uncovered in public in defiance of a strict dress code, state media reported.

The report comes exactly 10 months after the September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, triggered nationwide protests and saw morality police largely disappear from the streets, while more and more women flouted the law.

Amini, an Iranian Kurd, had been arrested by morality police for allegedly violating the dress code, which requires women to cover their head and neck in public.

While the morality police withdrew, authorities have taken other measures to enforce the law. These included closure of businesses whose staff do not conform to the rules, and installing cameras in public places to track down offenders.

But starting yesterday, the traditional approach is being tried again, state media said.