

Death toll mounting from South Asia's devastating monsoon

August 13 2024, by Aishwarya KUMAR and Paavan MATHEMA in Kathmandu



Men riding a camel across a flooded field on the banks of river Ganges in India on August 6.

Torrential storms lashing South Asia have killed hundreds of people

since June, official data showed Tuesday, with flooding and landslides causing widespread devastation during the treacherous monsoon season.

Weather-related disasters are common during the monsoon season from June to September, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

The deaths include at least 250 in India, 171 in Nepal and 178 in Pakistan, according to official data in each country.

In India, just months after the country baked in its longest-ever heat wave, according to government weather experts, ferocious rainstorms have triggered widespread flooding and landslides.

The crushing heat wave in May and June saw temperatures in New Delhi match the capital's previous record high: 49.2C (120.5F) clocked in 2022.

Now the heat has been replaced by rains.

India's weather department this week warned of "heavy rainfall" over much of the south and northeastern states.

On Tuesday, rescue teams searched for two missing people after nine drowned when a surge of water smashed through the Una district of Himachal Pradesh state.

Witnesses saw a car being swept away like a toy by the swollen muddy river.

"Several people tried to stop the car...as the current was increasing but the car sped past and soon the car was swept away by the strong current," Rajendra Kumar said.



People commute through a waterlogged road after heavy rainfall in Gurgaon, outside India's capital New Delhi.

Floods in deserts

Scores of people have died in India this month alone, while 200 people died in the southern state of Kerala last month when landslides hit villages and tea plantations.

In Nepal, 171 people have died since monsoon rains began in mid-June, including 109 people in landslides.

Other deaths have been caused by floods and lightning, according to the

disaster authority.

Searches continue in central Nepal's Chitwan district for two buses swept over concrete crash barriers in a raging river on July 12, killing around 50 people.

Ninety-two children are among the 178 deaths across Pakistan since the rains arrived in July, with the collapse of homes the biggest killer, according to the National Disaster Management Authority.

In the north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, mountain villages have been warned of the risk of glacial lake flooding this week as temperatures and humidity climb.



Men row a boat near a deluged straw hut in the river Ganges in Prayagraj: in India, just months after the country baked in its longest-ever heatwave, ferocious rainstorms have triggered widespread flooding and landslides.



Children play after rainfall in the old quarters of Delhi on August 8. Monsoon rains across the region from June to September offer respite from the summer heat and are crucial to replenishing water supplies.

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They are also vital for agriculture, and therefore the livelihoods of

millions of farmers and food security for South Asia's nearly two billion people.

India is the world's third-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases but has committed to achieve a net zero emissions economy by 2070—two decades after most of the industrialized West.

For now, it is overwhelmingly reliant on coal for power generation.

Pakistan, meanwhile, contributes less than one percent to global greenhouse gases yet is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

In 2022, catastrophic flooding plunged a third of the country underwater, killing over 1,700 people, displacing 33 million and destroying thousands of homes.

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