

Beat: Travel

Death toll from monsoon floods in northern India hits 178

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USPA News - The death toll after heavy monsoon rains triggered massive floods and landslides across a number of states in northern India this week has surpassed 175, officials said on Friday, as rescue efforts intensified with fears the death toll could surpass 1,000. The death toll in Uttarakhand state, the worst affected area, stood at 150 by Friday morning, including some 50 people who were submerged by flash floods at the famous Kedarnath shrine. A government statement said 23 people were identified as missing in the Uttarakhand, but local officials warned the actual number is expected to be in the hundreds.

The massive floods in the state, described as "unprecedented," destroyed houses, roads, and bridges. Among those killed in Uttarakhand were three people who died when a three-story apartment building toppled into a river in Uttarkashi, and video broadcast by Indian media showed the dramatic collapse. The overall death toll from the disaster had reached at least 175 by Friday morning, including 17 deaths in the state of Uttar Pradesh and 11 deaths in Himachal Pradesh. The figure includes five family members who died when boulders came down on their house in Himachal Pradesh. Weather conditions improved on Wednesday, allowing rescue workers to increase their efforts to find survivors and rescue those in need. The Ministry of Home Affairs said a total of 33,192 pilgrims had been rescued and transported to safer places by late Thursday, but more than 50,000 others are still stranded at various locations. The Ministry of Defense said its armed forces further stepped up its rescue and relief operations on Thursday, with more than 8,100 troops and dozens of aircraft deployed in the worst affected areas of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. It makes it one of the biggest ever rescue operations in Uttarakhand state. Monsoon rains arrived in India at the beginning of this month, first arriving in the country's southwest before traveling north as it soaked farmland desperately in need of rain after scorching summer temperatures. The monsoon season lasts from June to September, during which the country receives three quarters of its yearly amount of rainfall.

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