

200 Indian tourists among 600 stranded due to Nepal floods

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Kathmandu: Nearly 600 tourists, including 200 Indians, have been stranded in central Nepal's popular tourist district Chitwan due to flooding triggered by heavy rains that have claimed 49 lives, officials said today. Heavy rains have lashed Nepal for the past three days causing flooding and landslides at several places in the Himalayan country.

Passengers walk through the flooded Janakpur airport in Nepal.(AP/PTI photo)

The swollen Rapti river flooded several hotels in the Chitwan Valley, where the country's first national park is located.

Chief District Officer Narayan Prasad Bhatta said four rubber rafts have been sought from neighbouring Devghat to carry out relief operations. Suman Ghimire, chairman of the Regional Hotel Association, said the trapped tourists were being rescued with the help of elephants.

The home ministry has been approached for help, said a hotelier.

The meteorological department forecast that central and western plains were likely to receive heavy rainfall from this evening. The monsoon, it added, was gradually getting weaker in the eastern region and moving towards the western region.

The death toll due to flooding and landslides across Nepal since Friday reached 49, officials said.

Thirty six people have been reported missing, they added.

Twenty one districts have been badly hit by flooding and landslides, The Himalayan Times reported, citing the latest data released by the home ministry.

Of the 600 tourists stranded in the Chitwan Valley, nearly 200 were from India and about the same number from other countries.

More than 35,000 houses have been partially submerged, about 1,000 damaged and close to 400 livestock have died due to the flooding, the ministry data showed.

Transportation via the East West Highway, one of the longest in the Himalayan country, has been suspended after a pillar at a connecting bridge was washed away in the flooding.

Yesterday, the Nepal government Cabinet held an emergency meeting. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba ordered district administrations to intensify rescue operations.

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