

Heatwave kills around 400 people in Karachi

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Karachi: An intense heatwave sweeping across Pakistan's southern Sindh province has killed around 400 people, including women and children, in the capital Karachi, prompting the army to step in to help victims of the worst heatstroke that has hit the country in more than a decade.

The heatwave that has been going on since the advent of Ramzan on Friday has caused havoc and triggered an emergency situation in major hospitals of the province.

Three major state-owned hospitals confirmed a combined death toll of 341 until yesterday while other hospitals also reported deaths due to heat stroke, exhaustion and low blood pressure.

"We have until yesterday evening had nearly 200 deaths from this heat wave," said Seemi Jamali, medical superintendent at Jinnah Hospital.

"These 200 include dead bodies we have got from the scorching heat wave and those who passed away in the hospital while under treatment for heat stroke and dehydration," she said.

Jamali said the hospital had in four days treated around 3000 people suffering from illnesses related to the heat wave.

While doctors at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital said 71 people had died due to the heat wave until yesterday, Saeed Qureshi, a doctor at the Civil hospital confirmed 70 deaths.

"There have been deaths from the heat wave at other hospitals also and the death toll is close to 400 now," Qureshi said.

The Sindh government has imposed a state of emergency at all hospitals, cancelling leave for doctors and other medical staff and is increasing stocks of medical supplies.

The Pakistan Army and paramilitary Rangers have also set up special centres for treatment of heat stroke victims and also supplied related medicines to government hospitals.

Most of the deaths have occurred due to heat and gastro-related problems, said Salma Kausar, spokesperson Karachi Medical Corporation.

She said 14 women and two children were among those who died yesterday.

Saqib Zeeshan, a spokesman for Indus Hospital, said 20 people had died of heat-related complications at the hospital till yesterday, while the Sindh health minister said at least 15 deaths had been registered at Lyari General Hospital.

According to Liaquat National Hospital representative Anjum Rizvi 22 people lost their lives in the past 72 hours, while Khalid Masood, spokesman for Qatar Hospital, said 24 people were reported dead at the hospital.

- PTI