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By MELANIE ANDORFER / AP / July 26, 2005, 3:50 PM

# India: Monsoon Death Toll Tops 500



Auto mechanic Sarah "Bogi" Lateiner (center) teaches basic car maintenance classes to women. / CBS

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Digging through rivers of mud and debris, rescuers scoured flood-ravaged Bombay neighborhoods and outlying villages Thursday in search of survivors of record-breaking rains that killed at least 513 people.

Meanwhile, a top government official says a stampede -- set off by false rumors of a dam burst -- killed at least 15 people, including seven children. More than 25 people were injured. The stampede occurred late today in a slum in northern Bombay.

While the rains have ended, leaving just an overcast sky, parts of the city were hit by up to 94 centimeters (37 inches) of rain on Tuesday, the highest one-day total in Indian history. Those rains, and the comparatively lighter downpours that stretched into Wednesday, brought this city to a halt and devastated wide swaths of surrounding Maharashtra state.

With a government-ordered holiday keeping workers at home, the region spent Thursday trying to recover.

In the northern Bombay suburb of Saki Naka, relief workers and survivors sifted through the rubble of a shanty town crushed when a water-soaked hill collapsed on top of it. While the complete toll was unclear, at least 110 people were killed, and more than 45 people were missing and presumed dead.

"It was terrible to pull out little babies from under boulders and mud," said firefighter S. Shinde, wiping his brow with mud-caked hands. "The very young and the old just didn't make it.

On Thursday, rescuers piled bodies onto trucks and flagged down private cars to carry several dozens of injured people to hospitals.

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Officials said 273 people died in Bombay, India's financial capital and the capital of Maharashtra. Most people drowned, were crushed by falling walls or were electrocuted.

The morning after the deluge, the government began warning people to remain in their offices or homes. But for some, who had set off from their offices Tuesday night, the warnings came too late.

"I lost count of the number of people who were electrocuted. There were clusters of people who stepped on exposed wires," said civic relief worker Arya B. "They should have just stayed where they were."

At least 513 people were reported dead across Maharashtra, said B.M. Kulkarni, the deputy secretary in charge of the state's emergency control room in Bombay.

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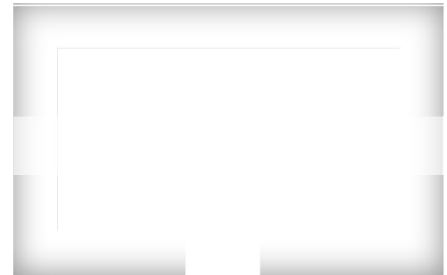
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