

Pakistan heatwave death toll nears 200

22 June 2015



A Pakistani youth cool themselves off at a river during a heatwave on the outskirts of Islamabad on June 22, 2015

Nearly 200 people have died in a heatwave in southern Pakistan, officials said Monday, as the government called in the army to help tackle widespread heatstroke in the worst-hit city Karachi.

The death toll in Karachi, the country's largest city, where temperatures hit 45 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) at the weekend, is at least 180 and a further 11 deaths were reported in southern parts of central Punjab province.

The deaths come a month after neighbouring India suffered the second deadliest heatwave in its history, with more than 2,000 deaths.

Doctor Sabir Memon, a senior health official with the government in southern Sindh province, said the [death toll](#) was 180 and warned it was likely to rise in the evening.

An AFP tally based on information from five hospitals around Karachi suggested the toll there could be as high as 249.

National Disaster Management (NDMA) spokesman Ahmed Kamal told AFP the government had asked the army and paramilitary Rangers to help relief efforts which will include setting up heatstroke treatment centres around the city.

Coping with the scorching heat has been made harder by the power cuts that are a daily feature of life in Pakistan.

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

Another 11 deaths were reported Monday in the southern part of Punjab province.

"Eleven people have so far died because of heat related diseases in South Punjab during last 48 hours," a [health official](#) in the city of Multan told AFP.

Doctors say most of those who have died succumbed to heatstroke.

The Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, during which devout Muslims abstain from all food and drink during daylight hours, began on Friday, coinciding with what is usually the hottest time of year in Pakistan.

Sher Shah, a veteran medical practitioner and former president of the Pakistan Medical Association said Karachi's poor were most at risk.

In Karachi, a city of 20 million people, electricity shortages crippled the water supply system, hampering the pumping of millions of gallons of water to consumers, the state-run water utility said.

Pakistan's Met Office said temperatures hit 43 C in Karachi on Sunday and 49 C in the southwestern city of Turbat, close to the Iranian border.

More hot and humid weather is predicted for the

coming 24 hours, though thunderstorms forecast for later in the week could bring cooler weather.

India's brutal heatwave last month led to at least 2,005 deaths, most in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Hundreds of mainly poor people die at the height of summer every year in India, but this year's toll was the second highest in the country's history.

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