

Indonesian capital reels from floods that leave 47 dead



Jakarta, January 6 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of evacuees were crammed in emergency shelters over the weekend waiting for floodwaters to recede in and around Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, as the death toll from massive New Year's flooding reached 47, officials said.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged a dozen districts in greater Jakarta and caused landslides in the Bogor and Depok districts on the city's outskirts as well as in neighboring Lebak, which buried a dozen people.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo said the fatalities also included those who had drowned or been electrocuted since rivers broke their banks early on Wednesday after extreme torrential rains throughout New Year's Eve. Three elderly people died of hypothermia.

It was the worst flooding since 2007, when 80 people were killed over 10 days. "The waters came very fast, suddenly everything in my house was swept away," said Dian Puspitasari, a mother of two, who looked overwhelmed trying to sweep piles of mud out of her home. "To clean up this thick mud is another disaster for us."

Four days after the region of 30 million people was struck by flashfloods, waters have receded in many middle-class districts, but conditions remained grim in narrow riverside alleys where the city's poor live.

At the peak of the flooding, about 397,000 people sought refuge in shelters across the greater metropolitan area as floodwaters reached up to 6 meters (19 feet) in some places, Wibowo said.

Data released by his agency showed some 173,000 people were still unable to return home, mostly in the hardest-hit area of Bekasi. More than 152,000 people remain crammed at 98 emergency shelters with sufficient supplies in Jakarta's satellite city of Bekasi, where rivers burst their banks. Much of the city was still submerged in muddy waters up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) high, according to the agency.

Jakarta is home to 10 million people, or 30 million including those in its greater metropolitan area. It is prone to earthquakes and flooding and is rapidly sinking due to uncontrolled extraction of ground water. Congestion is also estimated to cost the economy \$6.5 billion a year.

President Joko Widodo announced in August that the capital will move to a site in sparsely populated East Kalimantan province on Borneo island, known for rainforests and orangutans.

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