

Severe Flooding in Myanmar Slows Rescue Efforts



Naypyidaw, August 1 (RHC)-- Severe flooding across Myanmar has hampered rescue efforts as thousands are sheltered at monasteries there.

"Most of the country is flooded now," AFP quoted a government official as saying on condition of anonymity on Saturday.

He added that all but one of Myanmar's 14 provinces and regions were affected by the flash floods, rising waters and landslides caused by ongoing downpours in the Asian country.

Rescue efforts by Myanmar authorities and local aid groups were under way but they are "struggling to access flood-hit areas," the official said.

The official added that there was no update to Thursday's death toll of 27 due to disrupted communications. But reports say that number is likely to go up.

The western Rakhine and Chin states are among the four worst affected areas. Earlier this week, President Thein Sein declared them "national disaster affected regions," according to the state-owned Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) newspaper.

According to a government announcement, the western regions of the country “have seen huge destruction and face difficulty returning to normal conditions,” the GNLM reported.

The state of Rakhine already hosts some 140,000 displaced people, mainly Rohingya Muslims, who live in exposed make-shift coastal camps following deadly 2012 unrest between the minority group and extremist Buddhists.

“More than 7,000 people are sheltering in rescue camps at 23 monasteries in Minbyar town. We need drinking water urgently. Our road communication is cut,” Khin Zaw Win, a resident in Minbyar, a town in northern Rakhine, told reporters.

Myanmar is struck by annual monsoon rains that are a lifeline for farmers but can also prove deadly. This year’s floods have so far destroyed at least 30,000 acres of farmland, and damaged a further 73,000 according to the GNLM.

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