

84,000 hit by Bangkok floods

Bangkok: Incessant rain hammered several areas of Thailand's capital on Saturday, disrupting traffic and forcing thousands to evacuate, as authorities declared the city a disaster area.

Thailand's meteorological department warned that the deluge, which has been pouring since Thursday afternoon, would continue in most parts of the country through Sunday.

Accumulated rainfall in many areas of Bangkok since Thursday exceeded 30 centimetres, officials said. Floodwaters spread across the city, particularly in the central and eastern parts, blocking roads and stopping traffic.

Although not all parts of Bangkok were submerged, the city declared all 50 districts a flood disaster area to help authorities respond quickly. More than 200 shelters were set up across the city and about 4,200 people have moved in, according to Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt.

More than 84,000 people in 21 provinces nationwide were affected by flooding as of Saturday, especially in the central region. Authorities sent emergency



People wade through a flooded street next to a submerged taxi during heavy rain in Bangkok on Thursday. (Reuters)

warning messages through cell-phones, the government said.

Hwang Hwan-chung, who flew from South Korea and has visited Bangkok a dozen times, said he had never seen such "crazy" weather, adding that he couldn't find a taxi.

Sukanya Tongsuk, a resident, said the current flooding was similar to the last time Bangkok was hit in 2011.

Dutch resident Bjorn Franken, who has lived in the capital for two years, said he was able to cope although one event he wanted to attend had been cancelled.

Many businesses in Bangkok closed on Saturday due to flooding.

Cars crawled along waterlogged roads in parts of Bangkok, and bikers were seen pushing their motorcycles. Authorities said some regional bus services from Bangkok to the eastern provinces were suspended.

Phetchaburi Road, one of the capital's busiest, was unusually quiet as vehicles were turned back by floods. Some were left partially submerged. AP

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