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## Jakarta floods kill nine, nearly 200,000 homeless

04 Feb 2007 05:06:00 GMT

Source: Reuters

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JAKARTA, Feb 4 (Reuters) - Floods in the Indonesian capital have killed at least nine people and made nearly 200,000 people homeless, with the deluge of muddy brown water up to 4 metres (13 feet) deep in some areas of Jakarta, officials said on Sunday.

Although downpours weakened over the capital at the weekend, heavy rain in upland areas sent more water into already swollen rivers criss-crossing the low-lying capital.

Floods in the rainy season in Indonesia are common, but the devastation of recent days has been the worst in five years, and meteorology officials have warned that the city could suffer another week of heavy rains.

Officials are also concerned that the displacement of so many people and water contamination could bring disease in a city which is already struggling with a surge in cases of dengue fever.

"Initial data on the flooding in Jakarta, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi, shows nine have died and one is missing," Rustam Pakaya, a health ministry official, said via telephone text message. Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi are areas surrounding the capital.

"We will distribute eight tonnes of baby food, milk and other food. We are also preparing five medical teams, including ambulances and rubber boats," he added.

An official at the natural disaster centre in Jakarta said that as of Saturday evening their data showed 189,665 people were homeless in the capital and surrounding areas.

The official said public transport in Jakarta remained disrupted and some train lines had been cut outside the capital.

The floods have also caused major power blackouts and telephone lines were down in some parts of the city of 9 million as flooding affected underground cables, officials said.

In Kampung Melayu in the east of the capital, rescue workers and police said floodwaters reached 4 metres and thousands had to flee their homes after rivers burst their banks.

Near the area, a group of about 2,000 people had been forced to take shelter in the street, among them a baby whose mother had to pull her child out of the floods on a tyre.

The floods have affected both slum areas and posh housing estates in the city which were built on former swampland and remain vulnerable to flooding.

Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar blamed the heavy flooding on excessive construction in Jakarta's water catchment areas, the Jakarta Post newspaper reported.

Jakarta Governor Sutiyoso said building of luxurious villas and housing complexes around the city of Bogor had also accelerated water run-off into rivers flowing to the capital, the paper said.

(Additional reporting by Enny Nuraheni)

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