

At least 77 die in monsoon rains in Pakistan, flood alerts issued in India

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Children carrying household items wade through a flooded area after a monsoon rainfall in the southwestern city of Quetta, Pakistan. (File photo by AFP)

Islamabad, July 6 (RHC)-- Pakistan's climate change minister says more than 70 people have died in the ongoing monsoon rains lashing different parts of the country over the past few weeks.

Sherry Rehman said during a press briefing in the capital Islamabad on Wednesday that the toll is from June 14, when the monsoon started. "When people die like that, it's not a small thing... It is just the beginning. We have to prepare for it," the minister said. "One day you have drought and next morning you are expecting flash flood... so you can see how serious the situation is in Pakistan."

Most of the deaths were in the southwestern province of Balochistan, where 39 people drowned or were electrocuted by downed power lines.

Elsewhere in her remarks, Rehman warned that heavier-than-usual downpours were lying ahead. Poorly built homes across Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, are prone to collapse in floods, which also destroy huge tracts of prime farmland.

The worst floods of recent times were in 2010 – covering almost a fifth of the country's landmass – killing nearly 2,000 people and displacing 20 million.

Pakistan is the eighth country most vulnerable to extreme weather caused by climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index compiled by environmental NGO Germanwatch.

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