News
EarthBeat



A family wades through a flooded street during heavy rains in New Delhi, India, Aug. 6. (CNS/Reuters/Adnan Abidi)

by Catholic News Service

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Catholic churches and institutions in flood-hit Mumbai opened their doors to accommodate thousands of people stranded in the city by heavy rain and flooded streets.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India, and Syro-Malabar Bishop Thomas Elavanal of Kalyan, India, asked their parish priests Aug. 5 to help stranded and homeless people as heavy rain continued in western India, ucanews.com reported.

Thousands of train passengers were stranded in different areas of the city, Indian's financial capital, and in other suburbs and towns of Maharashtra state as two days of continuous rain began to submerge rail tracks, forcing authorities to cancel or divert services.

"Several churches and other institutions in Mumbai and its surroundings have been partially submerged in the flood water following incessant rain in the past couple of days in the city," said Fr. Nigel Barett, spokesperson for the Mumbai Archdiocese.

"People have been advised to move to safer places or to our churches and schools on higher ground," he said.

The region's three major three rivers — Godavari, Krishna and Tapi — plus their 10 tributaries flooded after authorities released water from overflowing dams as the region has received from 6 inches to 8 inches of rain since Aug. 1, reports said.

Five people are reported to have been killed since the rain began. Another 35 people died during the monsoons that started in the region in July, according to media reports.

However, Mumbai authorities said there was "no reason to panic and most people remained indoors" Aug. 5 following widespread warnings of "very heavy" rain in the city.

Barret said the city had come to a standstill following the suspension of rail services, which he described as the "lifeline of Mumbai."

"Only those who ventured out were stranded on local train station platforms and other public places following the suspension of rail services," he said.

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Roadblocks caused by debris washed into roadways caused additional disruptions, leading authorities to switch off electricity in many parts of the city.

"We have opened all our churches to accommodate flood-affected people," said Fr. Emmanual Kadankavil, vicar general of the Kalyan Diocese.

The diocese published the names and contact numbers of the parish priests in local media and social media platforms "to enable stranded people to seek help," Kadankavil told ucanews.com.

Parishioners provided food and took care of the immediate needs of those sheltered in the churches, the priest added.