

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

INDIA: HEAVY SNOWSTORMS AND AVALANCHES

25 February 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The Situation

The north of India has been experiencing heavy snowstorms from 16 to 20 February 2005, provoking avalanches in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. According to reports received from the state government, 230 persons were killed and more than 20 persons are missing. 308 persons have been rescued so far, including 40 foreigners. Anantnag and Poonch are the worst affected districts. Authorities have estimated that the death toll could rise to 500 since many people are still listed as missing and more bodies are being recovered from the snow and debris. The two villages of Nigeenpora and Panchgam are still buried under snow. A joint team of police and army officials are directing the rescue and relief efforts.

According to the latest news from the Indian meteorological department, the currently clear weather will continue for the next 48 hours. Due to the accumulation of snow and the prevailing clear weather conditions, the danger of avalanches remains.

According to Red Cross officials the most affected villages are Vatlangoo nar, Nageenpora, Quazigund in Anantnag district, and some villages of Machil, Tangar, Gurez and Uri in Baramullah and Kupwara districts where snow avalanches have caused heavy damage.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) volunteers swung into action on 21 February, providing the affected population with food packets which were air dropped by air force helicopters in the most affected areas. The IRCS branch

also mobilized 1,000 tarpaulin sheets, 5,000 blankets and 800 kitchen sets from locally available stocks. The branch has requested a further 10,000 blankets, 1,000 kitchen sets, 5,000 metres of warm cloth, and 4,000 emergency food packets, along with 5,000 bales of assorted woolen clothing. The national headquarters will transport this material over the weekend. The state branch also provided Rs 100,000 cash to the local authorities to provide vegetables and food material.

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