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'Weather may improve by Friday'

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The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has deployed Netra UAV for search and rescue in the remote areas of Kedarnath, Bhairav Chatti and Jungle Chatti in Uttarakhand. ITBP DG Ajay Chadha said ITBP personnel combed Bhairon Chetti and confirmed there were no survivors.

"We have ordered two more Netra UAVs from the manufacturers and expect to deploy them once the weather is clear," Chadha said.

He said the weather was expected to improve by Friday and in the meantime personnel on the ground are trying to evacuate those stranded through repaired roads. An ITBP team has already repaired the damaged roads from Badrinath to Hanuman Chatti which is now being used for rescue operations. Meanwhile, the total bodies recovered by the National Disaster Response Force and ITBP personnel, who are combing the area, reached 525. The bodies were handed over to the local police for identification and funeral rites. The Forest Department was asked to arrange 50 tonnes of wood and ghee for the funeral rites of victims at Kedarnath site on Tuesday.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna said those who are still stranded are safe and there is no threat to their life. "There are people stranded in Badrinath and Harsil but they are being provided food and water and as soon as the weather is clear, they will be evacuated," Bahuguna said.

Bahuguna also said that approximately 40,000 sq km of area is affected by flashfloods and landslides.

The water supply schemes of Chamoli in Badrinath, Pandukeshwar, Govindghat, Ghanghria, Joshimath, Gopeshwar, Karnaprayag, and Gauchar has been temporarily restored.

The state government has also deployed a team of 150 doctors and 2,500 paramedics in the affected areas. By Monday evening, the BSNL was able to restore all of its towers except four mobile towers in Kedarnath, Dharchula, Agastya Muni and Narayan Bagar.

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