

Two dead in India, roads submerged as Cyclone Michaung nears

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CHENNAI (Reuters) – At least two people died and the runway of one of India's busiest airports lay submerged due to torrential rain as two southern states braced on Monday for a severe cyclone likely to hit in the next 24 hours.

Cyclone Michaung was expected to make landfall on the coast of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday morning, the country's weather office said, with sustained winds of 90-100 kph (56-62 mph), gusting to 110 kph.

Two people were killed when a wall collapsed because of heavy rain in the Chengalpattu district of neighboring Tamil Nadu state, said joint director of the state disaster management department, C. Muthukumar.

In Tamil Nadu capital Chennai, the state's largest city and a major electronics and manufacturing hub, cars were swept away as floodwater flowed



PEOPLE ARE taken to safety in a boat past partially submerged vehicles in a residential area following heavy rains ahead of Cyclone Michaung in Chennai yesterday. (Reuters)

through the streets, while its airport, one of the busiest in India, shut down operations for the day, citing severe weather.

Media showed pictures of grounded planes with their wheels submerged in water as the rain pelted down.

Taiwan's Foxconn2317.TW and Pegatron4938.TW halted AppleAAPL.O iPhone production at their facilities near

Chennai due to heavy rains, sources familiar with the matter reported.

Several areas of the city were submerged in knee-deep water and there have been power outages since Monday morning, a Reuters witness said, evoking memories of December 2015 when around 290 people died after catastrophic floods.

Authorities in both states were on high alert, evacuat-

ing thousands of people living in coastal areas, officials in both states said, with warnings issued to fishermen not to venture out to sea.

Schools, colleges, offices, and banks were closed on Monday and Tuesday in at least four districts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, because of weather conditions, a government notice said.

Parts of Andhra Pradesh were likely to get more than 200 mm. of rain over the next 24 hours, India's weather office said.

In Andhra Pradesh, authorities had evacuated nearly 7,000 people from eight coastal districts and were preparing to evacuate a total of 28,000, depending on the cyclone's path and severity, a senior official in the state's disaster management department said.

At least 800 people have been evacuated so far from Bapatla, the coastal town in Andhra Pradesh where the cyclone is expected to make landfall on Tuesday, said P Ranjit Basha, district collector of Bapatla.