

More than 40 die in India's cold wave: officials

(AFP) – Jan 3, 2010

LUCKNOW, India — More than 40 people have died in a cold snap gripping northern India which prompted the authorities on Monday to shut thousands of schools and dole out firewood, officials said.

India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh has recorded 30 cold-related deaths since Saturday, police spokesman Soren Srivastava said in the state capital Lucknow.

Uttar Pradesh chief bureaucrat Arun Kumar Gupta said all schools and colleges were shut for four days until Thursday as a health precaution.

Gupta said state authorities on Monday also decided to spend 100 million rupees (2.17 million dollars) to hand out free blankets and much-needed firewood to the needy in freezing Uttar Pradesh which borders Nepal.

He said most of the victims were homeless people.

Night temperatures across northern India currently range between minus 3.8 degrees Celsius and nine degrees Celsius (25 and 48 degrees Fahrenheit), according to weather reports.

Uttar Pradesh government spokesman Diwakar Tripathy meanwhile said an exercise was underway to move the homeless into state-run night shelters.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency earlier had reported 33 dead in Uttar Pradesh, quoting official sources.

In adjoining Bihar, India's second most populous state, a spokesman from its disaster management unit reported 11 cold related deaths since Sunday and added all local schools were shut for three days from Monday.

Private welfare agencies however estimate more than 30 people may have succumbed to the cold in Bihar, one of India's most impoverished states, since last month.

PTI on Monday reported a cold-related death in hilly Uttarakhand state.

Over the weekend, airline and railway schedules were severely affected due to fog blanketing north India, with poor visibility causing three train accidents that claimed 10 lives.

New Delhi airport spokesman Anirudh Chatterjee told AFP that 150 passenger flights were delayed, 50 cancelled and 25 others rescheduled over the weekend due to bad weather.

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Photo 1 of 2



Tourists walk on fresh snow in Kufri near Shimla



Map



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