

Taiwan shuts down for second day as Typhoon Krathon makes landfall

AFP- Typhoon Krathon made landfall in Taiwan's south on Thursday, the island's weather agency said, after forcing schools and offices to shut for a second day amid winds and rain that have left two dead and more than 100 injured.

Krathon was packing sustained wind speeds of 126 kilometres (78 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 162 kph just before reaching the southern seaport city of Kaohsiung, according to the Central Weather Administration (CWA).

"Typhoon Krathon made landfall near Kaohsiung's Xiaogang district at around 12:40 pm (0440 GMT)," it said in a post on messaging app Line.

While CWA chief Cheng Chia-ping said Wednesday that the typhoon was expected to weaken rapidly after landing, residents of Kaohsiung were urged to take shelter.

"There will be winds of destructive force caused by typhoon in this area. Take shelter ASAP," the CWA said in a warning sent five times to residents' mobile phones Thursday.

Kaohsiung's mayor, Chen Chi-mai, told reporters the city was experiencing "the strongest winds" ahead of the typhoon's landfall.

"We urge residents not to go out unless necessary," he said. "So far, Kaohsiung has recorded 356 disaster cases, mostly falling trees and advertising signs."

Torrential rain and powerful winds unleashed on the island have already left at least two people dead, two missing and 123 injured, said the National Fire Agency.

A 70-year-old man was rushed to hospital on Tuesday after he fell while trimming trees in eastern Hualien county and died in hospital the next day.

And a 66-year-old man, hospitalised in nearby Taitung on Monday after his truck hit a huge rock that had fallen onto the road, also died Wednesday.

Krathon has disrupted traffic, causing all domestic flights to be suspended for a second day and the cancellation of around 240 international flights.

Across Taiwan, nearly 10,000 people had been evacuated as of Thursday, according to the interior ministry.

Krathon has caused mudslides and flooding, and damaged houses and roads in some areas as it slowly moves towards Taiwan, officials and reports said.

In Kaohsiung, strong gusts swept three motorcyclists to the ground as they were driving, while swaying buildings, shattering windows in some houses and uprooting trees.

Powerful waves pounded the coast of nearby Pingtung county, with some seawater spilling onto a road and causing it to collapse in two places, TV footage showed.

In New Taipei city in the island's north, where rain and wind was intensifying, a mudslide sent a large rock tumbling down onto a temple near a slope, partially smashing its roof, SET TV reported.

Taiwan is accustomed to frequent tropical storms from July to October, but experts say climate change has increased their intensity, leading to heavy rains, flash floods and strong gusts.

In July, Gaemi became the strongest typhoon to make landfall in Taiwan in eight years, killing at least 10 people, injuring hundreds, and triggering widespread flooding in Kaohsiung.

Krathon reached Taiwan after first slamming into a remote group of Philippine islands, where it cut power and communications and damaged “many” houses, according to a local mayor.

AFP