

Second storm slams into northern Philippines

By ROHAN SULLIVAN, Associated Press Writer Rohan Sullivan, Associated Press Writer— OCTOBER 3 2009

MANILA, Philippines – Typhoon Parma slammed into the Philippines on Saturday, ripping off roofs, toppling power pylons and swelling rivers in the country's mountainous north. At least two people were killed, an official said.

The storm — the country's second in eight days — cut a path across the northeastern tip of the main island of Luzon and was headed in the direction of Taiwan, where evacuations of southern villages were under way.

The capital, Manila, escaped the worst of the storm. The city was still reeling from one on Sept. 26 that caused the worst flooding in four decades, killing at least 288 people and damaging the homes of 3 million more.

The provinces of Cagayan and Isabela were hardest hit Saturday by powerful winds and drenching rain, cutting some communications and roads to some towns.

"The damage is quite heavy," Cagayan police Chief Roberto Damian told ABC-CBN television. "We are clearing highways and roads to reach people calling for rescue."

In Isabela, one man drowned and another died from exposure to the cold and wet weather, said Lt. Col. Loreto Magundayao of an army division based in the province.

Tens of thousands of people were moved to safe ground across the Philippines ahead of the typhoon, though officials said the threat of another national disaster eased as Parma changed course overnight Friday and bypassed the capital, parts of which are still chest-deep in floodwaters.

Trees were uprooted and power poles toppled in the provincial capital of Tuguegarao, Cagayan local government official Bonifacio Cuarteros told The Associated Press by telephone. Buildings had their roofs torn off. Similar damage was reported in neighboring Isabela.

Parma hit the coast packing sustained winds of 108 mph (175 kph), though they weakened as the storm passed overland, the national weather bureau said.

Weather bureau chief Prisco Nilo warned that the heavy rain could trigger landslides and flooding, and strong winds could create tidal surges "similar to a tsunami" along the eastern coast.

After the storm changed course, officials began moving back tens of thousands of people who had been evacuated from coastal areas that might have been in the path of the storm.

Taiwan issued a storm warning and began moving people out of villages in the southern county of Kaohsiung, local official Lin Chun-chieh said. Flash floods from the last typhoon to hit the Kaohsiung area killed about 700 people in August.

The earlier storm to hit the Philippines, Ketsana, went on to hit other Southeast Asian countries, killing 99 in Vietnam, 14 in Cambodia and 16 in Laos.

It was part of more than a week of destruction in the Asia-Pacific region that has claimed more than 1,500 lives so far: an earthquake Wednesday in Indonesia; a tsunami Tuesday in the Samoan islands; and Typhoon Ketsana across Southeast Asia.

Another typhoon, Melor, was churning in the Philippine Sea, 1,600 miles (2,575 kilometers) to the east, threatening the U.S. territory of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Most businesses there were shut Saturday morning, and residents of the island of Saipan who don't live in concrete homes moved to typhoon shelters, said Charles Reyes, Northern Marianas Gov. Benigno Fitial's press secretary.