

Avalanche: Search and rescue operation called off

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GANGTOK, April 5: Gangtok collector Tushar Nikhare today announced the completion of search and rescue operation at avalanche site at 13th Mile on the Gangtok-Nathu La road.

“Until 3 pm, no further missing persons were identified and no one was expected to be buried under the slide as the police had already located all the people who were reported missing through the helpline number,” the DC said.

The search and rescue operation was launched for second day today to ensure that no tourists were trapped in the snow slide. The search and rescue operation had started at 8 am by the rescue teams of Sikkim Police, NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, Army, BRO, DDMA and Tiranga Mountain Rescue team under the leadership of Gangtok SP, the operation section chief, to account for missing person if any, the DC said in a press meet.

A specialized radar system which can detect objects buried 20 meters



below the snow was also used.

Nikhare informed that while the rescue operation has been terminated, the helpline number will remain active.

The DC also clarified that the incident was not an avalanche but a snow slide, as per the experienced persons' assessment. He also mentioned that tourists would not be allowed to stop by the highway to take photographs or play with the snow.

“Concerned authorities and drivers have now been instructed to stop only in designated areas, where tourists could take photographs and enjoy the view,” the DC added.

The bodies of the four

deceased were handed over to the next of kin today, while bodies of three other will be sent on Thursday.

Tourism minister Bedu Singh Panth accompanied by secretary Prakash Chettri and other senior officers of the department visited the site of the avalanche today to take stock of second day search and rescue operations. The minister and secretary also visited STNM Hospital to meet the injured tourists and their family members. The minister extended his deepest condolences to the tourists who lost their lives and extended all possible support of the department for treatment of injured tourists.

Army conducts rescue operation at avalanche spot

SE Report

GANGTOK, April 5: The rescue mission to look for any more survivors in the avalanche near MS 15 along Jawaharlal Nehru Marg in East Sikkim resumed Wednesday morning.

The efforts are being coordinated by civil administration, assisted by troops of Trishakti Corps Indian Army, BRO, State Disaster Management Authority team and civil police, an Army press release informs.

The efforts were suspended last evening after another minor slide occurred. As per civil administration, all persons have been extracted, however the search is being continued to rule out any eventuality, the release informs.



Four teams of Trishakti Corps led by four officers are part of the rescue mission that resumed in the morning. A medical column along with two medical officers is also present at the spot.

In addition, a team of Tiranga Mountain Rescue (TMR) deployed with Trishakti Corps is on site and

coordinating with all agencies for search and rescue. Indian Army has a MoU with the TMR under which, persons qualified on avalanche rescue are deployed at avalanche prone areas for imparting training and assistance in avalanche rescue missions, the release mentions.

Project Swastik responds swiftly to JN Marg avalanche, rescue tourists & clears passage to Gangtok

SE Report

GANGTOK, April 5: BRO Project Swastik was one of the key agencies involved in the operation to search and rescue tourists caught by the avalanche near Mile 13 along JN Marg leading to Tsomgo Lake and Nathu La on Tuesday.

The sudden avalanche had swept away a group of tourists who were taking photographs at the spot.

A press release informs that BRO Project Swastik launched a swift rescue operation, wherein 22 tourists were rescued including six victims from the deep valley down the road. The rescued tourists were shifted to the nearest hospital.

One lady, buried under the snow, was rescued after toiling for about 90 minutes and sent to the STNM Hospital in a BRO ambulance. In addition, 15 tourists who were partially buried under snow were rescued and sent to Gangtok after first aid.

Apart from this, more than 350 stranded tourists and 80 vehicles which were stuck at the avalanche site were evacuated after



clearing the snow from the route to Gangtok.

The rescue operation on Tuesday monitored at site by the Project Swastik chief engineer along with his team of officers and personnel were halted at around 5:45 pm due to heavy snowfall and zero visibility, the release mentions.

The rescue operation commenced Wednesday morning by the BRO, the release mentions.

Project Swastik has been in the forefront to rescue tourists who get stranded when roads are disrupted and blocked due to intense rains and snowfall in higher altitudes of East Sikkim and North Sikkim. Particularly this season, the Project Swastik men and machinery

have rescued hundreds of tourists as abnormal weather conditions disrupted various routes starting March.

The BRO Project Swastik teams are located in various remote locations of East Sikkim and North Sikkim, and are the first responders to such relief operations.

In the month of March alone, the Karmyogis of Project Swastik have assisted more than 10,000 tourists and over 3000 vehicles stuck at various places in North Sikkim and East Sikkim which includes popular tourist destinations like Tsomgo Lake, Nathu La, Dzuluk, Lachen and Lachung.