

South Korea flood death toll rises to 40, Yoon blames botched responses

SEOUL, July 17 (Reuters) - South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday blamed authorities' failure to follow disaster response rules as the death toll from days of torrential rain rose to 40, including a dozen people found dead in a submerged underpass.

Deluges have pummelled central and southern regions since Thursday as the rainy season that started in late June reaches its peak. The interior ministry has also reported nine people missing and 34 injured across the nation.

Twelve deaths, including three bodies found overnight, occurred in a tunnel in Cheongju, 110km (68 miles) south of Seoul, where 16 vehicles, including a bus, were swamped by a flash flood on Saturday after a river levee collapsed.

The incident fuelled questions over South Korea's efforts to prevent and respond to flood damage. Some drivers who use the road regularly blamed the government for failing to ban access to the underpass even though floods were widely forecast.

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