

Two dead, eight athletes hurt in South Korea balcony collapse

By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — A balcony inside a nightclub in South Korea collapsed, killing two people and injuring 16, including American and other athletes at the world swimming championships, officials said.

Hundreds were at the nightclub in the southern city of Gwangju when the collapse occurred next to the athletes' village.

Two South Korean men died while 16 others were injured, police said. According to a police account, the injured include 10 foreigners, eight of them athletes who were in Gwangju to participate in the swimming championships.

Among the athletes were three Americans, two New Zealanders, one Dutch, one Italian, and one Brazilian, a police officer said, requesting anonymity. He said most had minor injuries but an American female water polo player required surgery. The other two Americans — a man and a woman — are also water polo players, the police officer said.

Police said they detained one of the nightclub's co-owners and summoned three other club officials to investigate whether the collapsed balcony was an unauthorized structure.

"This is an awful tragedy," said Christopher Ramsey, CEO of USA Water



Polo. "Players from our men's and women's teams were celebrating the women's world championship victory when the collapse occurred at a public club. Our hearts go out to the victims of the crash and their families."

Among the Americans, Kaleigh Gilchrist of Newport Beach, California, suffered a deep left leg laceration and underwent surgery at a hospital in Gwangju, said Greg Mescall, director of communications for USA Water Polo. He said Paige Hauschild of Santa Barbara, California, suffered lacerations on the right arm and Johnny Hooper of Los

Angeles on the left hand that required stitches.

Ben Hallock of Westlake Village, California, suffered minor scrapes on the legs, he said.

The anti-disaster agency said the injured also included two Uzbekistan exchange students. None of the injured was in life-threatening condition.

Members of the New Zealand men's and women's water polo teams were also at the nightclub. The men's captain, Matt Small, described a chaotic scene and said his team tried to help the injured.

"(It was) business as usual and then it

UNSAFE STRUCTURE. Police investigators inspect a collapsed internal balcony at a nightclub in Gwangju, South Korea. The internal balcony collapsed, killing two people and injuring 16. (Chun Jung-in/Yonhap via AP)

literally collapsed beneath our feet," Small said, speaking to New Zealand Radio Sport by phone. "None of the boys are hurt or injured though — so that's good. But everyone's a bit shaken up at the moment."

"We did what we could but we couldn't really do too much. Some of them were pretty dire cases," he said. "We were more so just concerned about everyone else, we were trying to do a number count and make sure all the boys were there."

The local organizing committee for the world swimming championships said that eight of the athletes attending the event were injured, most slightly.

A committee statement said seven of them had already returned to the athletes' village after minor treatments at hospitals. It said one player had a leg lacerated and was to receive stitches at a hospital.

The organizing committee said it won't disclose other personal information about the athletes at the request of their national teams.

FINA, international swimming's governing body, said in a statement that it was "carefully monitoring the situation and will activate all measures to ensure healthcare and assistance is provided whenever necessary."

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5	4		3					
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Difficulty level: Hard #31254

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #72163 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

6	7	3	5	2	4	8	9	1
5	2	4	1	8	9	6	3	7
1	8	9	6	7	3	5	2	4
2	4	7	9	6	1	3	8	5
3	9	5	7	4	8	1	6	2
8	1	6	3	5	2	4	7	9
7	3	1	4	9	6	2	5	8
9	6	8	2	1	5	7	4	3
4	5	2	8	3	7	9	1	6

Sri Lanka gives free visa to boost tourism after bomb blasts

By Bharatha Mallawarachi
The Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka has announced it will give a one-month free visa on arrival to visitors from nearly 50 countries in its latest effort to revive the island nation's lucrative tourism industry that was badly hit by the Easter bomb attacks that killed 263 people.

Tourism minister John Amaratunga said tourists or those visiting for business purposes could get their free visa on arrival or applying online. The measure will be effective for six months.

He said the government expects a substantial increase of tourists from the move. "If it is not beneficial we will suspend this program," he said.

Because of the measure, the government may lose about 4.3 billion rupees (\$24 million) in revenue it could have earned from charging visas.

Sri Lanka charges \$35 for a one-month tourist visa, or \$20 for nationals from South Asia.

Seven suicide bombers from a local Muslim group, National Thowheed Jammath, attacked three churches and three luxury hotels on April 21, killing 263 people, including 45 foreigners mainly from China, India, the U.S., and Britain.

Many tourists cut short their holidays while others cancelled their bookings, dealing a severe blow to the tourism industry, the country's third-largest foreign currency earner after remittances from overseas workers and textile and garment exports.

According to government data, tourist arrivals declined by about 45% in July from a year earlier. However, arrivals in July, which stood at 117,000, showed a

moderate increase compared to 63,072 in June.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe assured that Sri Lanka is now safe for tourists and "security has returned to normalcy."

He said all those involved in the deadly attack are in custody and "even those who had longstanding association with them, although they have not involved in the attack, are also being questioned and some have been detained and some have been released."

About 200 were detained and police are continuing their investigations, he said.

The government has introduced many measures to revive tourism that include reducing airline ground charges, aviation fuel prices, and departure fees for at least six months. It set a one-year moratorium for repayment of loans for tourism-related businesses and cut interest rates on new loans. Hotels, too, have announced attractive packages with discounts up to 60%.

"We would like to promote Sri Lanka as a destination which is safe for people to visit and also we are giving them type of concessions and rates which they may not get for a long, long time," said Wickremesinghe.

About 2.3 million tourists visited Sri Lanka in 2018, when 29 airlines offered 300 flights per week. After the attacks, 41 fights per week were cancelled, amounting to a loss of 8,000 passenger seats. Several airlines have reinstated their normal schedules since then, but others have not.

Tourism accounts for 4.9% of Sri Lanka's GDP. Around half a million Sri Lankans depend directly on tourism and 2 million indirectly.

The government currently predicts \$3.7 billion in revenue from tourism this year, down from an initial forecast of \$5 billion.

Parched manufacturing city in India brings in water by rail

Continued from page 2

At one drop-off point, a neighborhood of low-slung, one-room houses called Thousand Lights, K. Devi, a 41-year-old mother, said the six jugs of water she receives free every day mean that she and her family can bathe and wash clothes just once a week. Sometimes she buys extra cans of water for 35 rupees (about 50 cents) apiece.

She is happy to have the water,

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regardless of the distance it had to travel to reach her Chennai slum.

"They are voluntarily giving water, then why should we refuse?" she said.

This isn't the first time water trains have rolled into Chennai. When the city experienced a severe drought in 2001, it imported water by rail from Erode township, more than about 250 miles southwest of Chennai.

After that, the state government mandated that Chennai households install rainwater collection systems. The water board also began buying water from farmers and built two desalination plants. But the supply still fell short of ever-growing demand.

Department of Consumer & Business Services

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