13 dead after Maria pummels Puerto Rico

San Juan

Puerto Rico was yesterday battling dangerous flooding after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island, as the death toll there jumped to 13 and authorities rescued nearly 700 people from high waters.

Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello called Maria the most devastating storm in a century after it destroyed the US territory’s electricity and telecommunications infrastructure.

“Part of the island is lacking communications so what we have are some preliminary assessments about 13 deaths at this juncture,” he told CNN early yesterday.

“We’re 24 hours post-hurricane warning and right now our efforts are to make sure we have everybody safe, that we can rescue people. Our efforts have already produced almost 700 rescues so we’re clearly focused on that.”

The National Hurricane Center said some areas in Puerto Rico could see 40 inches of rain from Maria, and Rossello warned of dangerous mudslides brought on by the deluge.

“We have a lot of flooding, we have reports of complete devastation of vulnerable housing. Of course it’s still raining over here.”

Maria was blamed for at least 33 deaths, including 15 in Dominica, three in Haiti and two in Guadeloupe.

Puerto Rico is absolutely obliterated,” US President Donald Trump told reporters on Thursday after declaring the territory of 3.4 million people a disaster area, a move that will free up emergency relief funding.

“Puerto Rico is in a very, very, very tough shape,” he said. (AFP)

Controversial Stalin bust unveiled in Moscow

Po
denis Borisevich

A woman stands between busts of Soviet leaders Joseph Stalin (3rd R) and Vladimir Lenin (2nd R) during a ceremony unveiling a series of new sculptures of top political figures at the so-called Alley of Rulers in downtown Moscow.

The seven sculptures spanning the history of the USSR from Lenin to Mikhail Gorbachev are the latest addition to the recently opened “Alley of Rulers” composition that already features 33 Russian rulers.

The display shows heads of state from the Norman warrior Rurik, who founded the first Russian state, to Alexander Kerensky, the head of the provisional government before Lenin seized power in 1917.

Malaria warning as resistant strain spreads

Bangkok

A form of malaria that is resistant to standard treatment has spread to Vietnam for the first time, researchers warned yesterday.

The strain was originally detected in Cambodia in 2007, and experts are calling for action before it reaches other areas such as India or Africa.

“It spread like a wildfire to Vietnam,” professor Arjen Dondorp, head of malaria department at the tropical medicine research unit at Mahidol University in Bangkok, said.

The co-author of an article published on Thursday in the medical journal The Lancet Infectious Diseases added: “It started 10 years ago in western Cambodia. It is very fit and spreads very easily. This resistance is taking over.”

“Cambodia has already changed to a new drug, likely to last one or two years, Vietnam has to change now.”

Colombo

A Sri Lankan couple is under investigation for deploying hundreds of school children to carry the train of the bride’s saree during a wedding ceremony, authorities said yesterday.

About 230 students of a state-owned school carried the train of the 3.2-kilometre (two-mile) long saree worn by the bride as she and the groom walked down a main road in the central district of Kandy Thursday, local media reported. Another 100 students served as flower girls at the wedding.

The students were from a school named after Central Province Chief Minister Sarath Ekanayaka who was a special