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Yangon, May 16 (Xinhua) The death toll from Cyclone Nargis has risen sharply to 77,738 in Myanmar, the state television reported in a night broadcast Friday.

The dead included 159 state service personnel, while a total of 55,917 people, including 58 government employees, remained missing, the report said.

The number of the injured stood at 19,359.

The sharp increase of the death toll was confirmed late because the disaster-hit area was so wide and the searching operation was hard, the report clarified.

Myanmar government outlined a cyclone-relief policy shortly after the disaster, welcoming aid supplies from any country but denying entry for foreign aid workers to help launch rescue and relief operations, saying that it prefers to use its own strength.

The government also disallows foreigners to have access to disaster-hit areas, designating that relief activities including foreign, public and individual donations be handed over through the government's central relief and resettlement headquarters.

Meanwhile, the authorities claimed that the first phase of rescue of storm victims, provision of temporary shelter, supply of food and clothes and healthcare has been underway promptly, while the second phase that includes construction of houses for the displaced, will begin soon.

During this phase the government will help the people rebuild their destroyed houses in towns and villages mainly in Irrawaddy and Yangon divisions.

The third step is to re-generate farmlands which were flooded by sea water in the storm

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