

Beat: Miscellaneous

40 feared dead after bus falls into river in northern Peru

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USPA News - A passenger bus plunged down a ravine and into a river in northern Peru on Wednesday, killing at least 33 people and leaving seven others missing, officials said on Thursday. It follows two bus accidents in March which claimed more than 40 lives combined.

The latest accident happened just before 6 a.m. local time on Wednesday when a double-decker bus plunged about 50 meters (165 feet) down a ravine and into the Tarma river in the district of San Ramon, which is located in Chanchamayo province within the country's Junin Department. The passenger bus, operated by the company Turismo Central, was traveling from Tarma to Chanchamayo when the driver lost control, went off the road and plunged down the ravine. Local authorities deployed rescue workers, but operations were hampered by torrential rains and strong currents in the river. Highway police said the vehicle was carrying 54 people, and rescue workers had recovered 33 bodies by Thursday morning. Fourteen survivors were rushed to medical centers in Chanchamayo, as well as local hospitals in La Merced and Tarma, but seven people remain missing and are presumed to have been killed. The exact cause of the accident was not immediately known, but Turismo Central spokeswoman Susana Natividad said the driver of the bus had indicated the road did not have adequate signs and the highway was in a poor condition. Peru's Transportation Ministry chief Elvira Moscoso denied the company's claims. On March 27, a total of 26 people were killed and 30 others were injured when a passenger bus carrying mostly mine workers plunged down a ravine in a mountainous region of southern Arequipa province. Just weeks earlier in the same province, at least 15 people were killed in a similar accident. Although the number of fatalities has dropped in recent years, road accidents remain common in Peru, killing thousands of people a year and injuring tens of thousands more. At least 2,514 people were killed as a result of road accidents in 2010, down from a reported 3,000 fatalities in 2009.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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