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Nepal's cabinet to meet on Everest

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BBC News, Syangboche



Nepali ministers will fly into the meeting by helicopter

Nepalese ministers are preparing to hold a cabinet meeting on Mount Everest to raise awareness of the effects of climate change.

Ministers hope the world's highest cabinet meeting will attract the same attention as a similar event held underwater in the Maldives in October.

The meeting comes ahead of next week's climate summit in Copenhagen.

Scientific studies show temperatures are rising faster in the Himalayas than the rest of South Asia.

It has led to reduced snowfall and caused glaciers to melt.

Helicopters have been ferrying in medical equipment, oxygen canisters, soldiers and journalists to the small airstrip at Syangboche, high in the Himalayas.

It is from here that the expedition will set off to Kalipatar - a plateau at 5,200m (17,000ft) next to Everest's base camp.

Sherpa monks

The entire cabinet of 21 ministers - including the prime minister - plan to travel to Kalipatar by helicopter early on Friday.

They will be greeted by Sherpa monks before beginning their cabinet meeting.

But ministers will stay at Kalipatar for only 30 minutes before returning to Syangboche.

The trip is being funded by a group of Nepali private organisations, many of them from the tourist sector.

Suman Pandey, who is in charge of operations, says that safety is their primary concern.

"This is high altitude and people could get altitude sickness," he said.

"We have got medical backup supported by the Himalayan Rescue Association."

Mount Everest is the highest point on earth, with a summit 29,035 ft (8,850 m) above sea level.