

Floods in North East India

Floods in Assam have claimed 45 lives while at least 1.7 million people have been badly affected.

The Brahmaputra river, which flows from China down to India and then through Bangladesh, has burst its banks after torrential monsoon rains, swamping more than 2,500 villages spread in 24 districts of the state in Assam state over the past weeks. Among the affected districts are Lakhimpur, Karimganj and Majuli, with thousands of families losing all their valuable possessions including household items.

More particularly, situation in Lakhimpur has remained grim since the last few days after the North-Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) released a huge quantity of water from its Ranganadi hydro-electric project dam in Arunachal Pradesh. Over 2.80 lakh people were affected in Lakhimpur district alone, while 1.38 lakh people have been affected in adjoining Dhemaji district.

In island district of Majuli, the Brahmaputra has caused three breaches on its embankments, inundating houses of over 50,000 people. Over 50 families have lost their homestead and cultivation land due to massive river-bank erosion caused by the river.

Union Minister of State for Home, Kiren Rijiju, accompanied by a team of officials from Niti Ayog, NDRF and Union Home Ministry, have been visiting the affected places in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to take stock of the floods and landslides that have claimed several lives. Fourteen persons were buried alive after a massive landslide wiped out half of Laptap, a village in Papum Pare district in Arunachal Pradesh on July 11.

India's Prime Minister expressed his anguish over the human suffering,

with thousands of people seeking shelter in more than 300 relief camps set up by the state authorities in Assam. Authorities have declared a "maximum health alert" to stop the spread of disease, a common feature following such floods.

The floods have not spared endangered one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO world heritage site. The flood waters have swamped the park with more than 90% park under water, according to Assam Forest Minister Pramila Rani Brahma.

Assam Floods

The death toll in the Assam floods climbed to 69 as four more deaths were reported on July 18, while nearly a million people remained affected in 16 districts in the state in one of the worst floods disaster in recent years.

The worst hit district in Assam is South Salmara where 125,040 people are affected, while in Morigaon district nearly 100,000 people are facing the flood fury as the state authorities struggle to reach out to affected populations spread in vast areas.

According to ASDMA, the swirling waters claimed four more lives and almost a million people have been affected in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath, Nalbari, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, South Salmara, Goalpara, Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Karimganj and Cachar districts.

The water in the Brahmaputra and the Barak rivers, and their tributaries, have been showing a receding trend at several places in the state with cessation of rainfall.

But the Brahmaputra is still flowing above the danger level at Dhubri,

Dhansiri at Numaligarh in Golaghat, and the Barak at Badarpurghat in Karimganj, and Kushiara river at Karimganj. About 20% area of the Kaziranga National Park is still inundated, which has affected about 35 anti-poaching camps at Kohora, Bagori and Bishwanath ghat.

The current wave of floods has badly affected animals and poultry in the flooded districts covered by forests. A total crop area of 205,587 hectares have been affected in 29 districts, the ASDMA report said.

Altogether 15,205 people have been rescued by the national and state disaster response forces, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), army, police, forest police, and district administrations.

Around 122,850 people have taken shelter in 334 relief camps where they have been provided with food, tarpaulins, disinfectants, candles, drinking water and medicines, the ASDMA said. ■

- Vandana Chauhan

Floods in Gujarat

Gujarat continues to witness heavy rains across the state that has led to flooding in various parts. According to the Gujarat government's emergency control room, five people including two women died when lightning struck them in three separate incidents in the state. In two incidents of lightning, four people were killed in Ahmedabad district and one in Morbi district.

With five deaths, total 65 people have died in rain related incidents in the state since June 1st while 21 have died since July 14 when the state came under spell of incessant rains which still continue in July 24 to 26 spell. ■

- Vishal Pathak