

Flood destroys homes of thousands in Garo Hills, Meghalaya

Flash Floods caused by torrential rains from Saturday to Monday (21st to 23rd September) created unseen panic and destruction in the entire region of Garo Hills, portion of Meghalaya. According to official records thirty people lost their lives, while thousands are in camps (schools, churches) and make shift tents. We fear that actual number of people who may have died would cross 200. Crops that were planted late have been planted recently due to late monsoon have been destroyed, cattle and livestock (cows, goats, sheep and pigs and chicken) died due to flood waters staying indoors within the house premises for more than five hours, houses razed to the ground and household articles, clothes and other items totally destroyed. Communication to the Garo Hills region remained totally cut off from Sunday till Wednesday morning. Schools have been closed and entire Government machinery has been put on assistance to provide food and ration to the affected families who were staying not only in camps but also in the houses of their relations making it difficult to make actual assessment of who lost what as a result of this unprecedented natural disaster in the history of Garo Hills.

Chief Minister Mukul Sangma admitted on Tuesday that the toll in floods and landslides triggered by incessant rain in Meghalaya has risen to 37, while more than 20 people are still missing and at least eight people were killed in a landslide Tuesday in the flood-affected areas of Garo Hills.

"As many as 37 people have lost their lives, either being drowned in the floods or killed in landslides across the

state. A total of 24 people are missing in Garo Hills," Sangma told IANS over phone from Tura, the district headquarters of West Garo Hills.

"The toll is expected to rise as many are feared to have been washed away by the floods and the district administrations are yet to verify the total number of casualties," he said. Officials said the flood situation in the plain areas of Garo Hills continued to be grim Tuesday and more than a lakh people have been displaced after the swollen Brahmaputra and Jiringam rivers submerged over 200 villages.

The Public Works Department was clearing the debris to reconnect Tura and other districts of Garo Hills with the rest of the country.

The state-owned Meghalaya Energy Corporation Limited has restored electricity in some parts of Tura, but many parts of Garo Hills continued to remain in darkness.

Government Machinery in operation: The Disaster Management Units have begun to provide relief to the affected families especially in the form of ration. The affected people are yet to begin to rebuild their lives .

Assistance Required: People need to buy clothes, kitchen utensils, help to rebuild their houses and the books and study materials of their children. Any help to aid the affected people would be appreciated. We also fear outbreak of cholera and other water borne diseases.