



Houses covered in thick mud and debris at flood-ravaged Devighat in Nepal's Nuwakot district on Saturday. (Reuters)

Call for Himalayan watch

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New Delhi: Environmental organisations on Saturday called for urgent Himalaya-wide cooperation, demanding that India, Nepal and China establish real-time monitoring of glaciers, glacial lakes and rivers following the catastrophic flash floods in Nepal.

The National Alliance of People's Movements, the National Alliance for Climate and Ecological Justice, and the All-India Rivers Forum in a joint statement said the flash floods were a painful reminder that the Himalayas were entering an increasingly dangerous era and "must not be dismissed simply as another natural disaster".

"This calls for urgent Himalaya-wide co-operation,

not only after disasters but before them, and it calls specifically for Nepal, Tibet, China and India to work as partners in that effort.

"Governments across the Himalayan region must establish continuous, real-time, local-scale monitoring of glaciers, glacial lakes, slopes and rivers; strengthen reliable, community-based early warning systems; share satellite, hydrological and meteorological information across national borders; and comprehensively map the potential pathways of catastrophic floods," the statement said.

Stressing the need for an early-warning mechanism, the groups pointed out that the recent disaster crossed international borders faster than national response systems could react.

In 2016, Nepal successfully lowered water levels at Imja

Tsho glacier lake and installed a community-based early warning system there. "But what still does not exist, in Nepal, India, or anywhere across the range, is a continuous, automated system watching every lake in every basin," the groups emphasised.

The organisations also demanded a reassessment of infrastructure development and settlements located in potential disaster pathways, citing poorly planned and misdirected "development".

Multiple construction activities are increasingly being pushed into extremely fragile valleys, and along river corridors where catastrophic floods, landslides, avalanches, and glacial lake outburst floods can occur, the organisations underlined. "A warming climate combined with

unsafe development can turn a high-altitude hazard into a mass-casualty disaster," the statement asserted.

They also demanded a pause on new high-risk infrastructure in vulnerable areas and a public review of the hydropower stations, roads and military installations built in fragile valleys.

The organisations demanded that people living in these high-risk regions be supported through training programmes that prepare them to respond when disaster strikes. "They must be equipped with practical skills in first aid, emergency and logistical response... and other established techniques in disaster preparedness and risk reduction. This knowledge can mean the difference between life and death in the crucial minutes before help arrives," the statement said.