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Flooding in Punjab: Reasons and Solutions

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Why in News: With incessant rainfall for three consecutive days leaving behind a trail of destruction in Punjab, including loss of lives, some experts explain the reasons behind it and a possible solution.

Flooding in Punjab: Causes

1Continuous rainfall

Owing to continuous rainfall, a number of rivers, including Sutlej, Beas, Ravi and Ghaggar, have swelled up in Punjab.

Villages experience floods when there is a breach in the embankment of these rivers and canals. For example, villages in Jalandhar have flooded due to breach in Sutlej river.

Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur and Nawashahr districts recorded several incidents of water accumulation in the villages, highways and link roads situated on the embankments of Sutlej and Beas and its rivulets. Similarly, in Patiala district, overflowing Ghaggar river submerged various villages.

A record rainfall in past three days also caused local flooding due to the choking of drains and siphons.

2Non separation of Sewage and Drain rain water plant

All major cities, including Patiala, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Bathinda and Amritsar, were affected.

An official in the municipal planning department said that cities are dependent on sanitary sewerage systems to drain rain water.

And when it rained so heavily, the sanitary sewers were not able to handle the water. Hence, it created a flood-like situation.

While parts of Patiala city faced flooding due to overflowing Badi Nadi, water from Ghaggar river entered houses in Mohali.

Irrigation expert Amarjit Singh Dullet said that this time, rainfall was also too intense and bad sewerage planning compounded to the problem.

3Climate Change

Climate change is a worldwide phenomenon but lack of cleaning of drains also contributed to flooding

The world experienced 20 per cent of the total monsoon rain in just 24 hours. It is the highest rainfall ever in 24 hours experienced by the region.

4Poor maintenance of Dams

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Even after construction of dams, regular maintenance and upkeep of dams need proper attention and funds.

If bandhs are not strengthening every year before the monsoon season, they will break and cause flooding

Drainage never figures in the priority list of all successive government. Indiscriminate sand mining also adds to the problems. Sand miners dig on the riverbeds near the bandhs thereby weakening the bandhs. During rains, these bandhs suffer breaches and inundate the surrounding area

5Rapid Urbanisation

Satellite cities, for instance Kharar near Chandigarh, which are new property hotspot, get affected the most during floods.

Rapid urbanisation has its own drawbacks. Owing to its proximity to Chandigarh, Kharar has become a property hotspot and to accommodate the rising population, land sharks carry out constructions in every inch available and leave no place for proper drainage and sewerage system.

The natural flow of water in such an area is often disrupted due to such indiscriminate construction. With monsoon becoming scanty of late, most of the times it has become acceptable for builders to construct on drains.

But the moment it rains heavily, the entire system gets affected. During the recent floods, a house on the bank of a drain in Panchvati enclave in Kharar was washed away

Way forward

Considering that there will be more unprecedented rainfall in the coming years owing to global warming, experts said that the government need to prepare in advance.

It should be made mandatory for cities to have storm water sewerage, which discharges rain water

As of now, only 10 per cent of cities have storm water drainage.

In Punjab, most areas have a bad sewerage system and when mud and silt in rainwater choke the sewers, flood water enters roads and houses. Punjab has to learn from Chandigarh, where the entire rain water gets discharged in 2-3 hours.

It is just about proper planning and if the authorities are serious, they can do it. Prevention is better than cure. When the government can spend crores on relief and rescue, they should first spend it on proper drainage and never let this happen again