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It is not just the quantum of rainfall that is drowning Mumbai

 (/author/sneh_singh) SNEH SINGH 30 AUGUST 2017 104 shares

With heavy waterlogging in Mumbai, people have been asked to stay at home. The Mumbai floods are more than just an act of God and draw attention to the adding up of man-made problems.

Save Mumbai before it's too late



Video Credit: Shruti Kedia.

Dark clouds, gloomy weather and unstoppable downpour has engulfed the city of dreams. This is India's financial capital, Mumbai, for the last four days. The lifeline of the city, the Mumbai local, has been paralysed, thousands are stranded in traffic jams, the city is submerged in water, life has come to a standstill. Heavy waterlogging is seen everywhere and people have been asked to stay at home.

In Mumbai, a flood like situation is not uncommon. With high precipitation levels, it is expected that rains would somewhat impact the everyday life in the city. However, this year, the severity of damage caused by the rains is shocking. Going back, in 2005 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maharashtra_floods_of_2005), more than 500 people died due to heavy rains. So, is it just the quantum of rainfall that is causing the floods?



Going back, in 2005, more than 500 people died due to heavy rains. So, is it just the quantum of rainfall that is causing the floods?

If we look at the two of counterpart cities of Mumbai, Singapore (<http://www.weather.gov.sg/climate-climate-of-singapore/>) and Kuala Lumpur (<https://weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-precipitation-Rainfall,Kuala-Lumpur,Malaysia>), the conclusion is negative. Both cities, which are the financial hubs of the South-East with an urban setup similar to Mumbai, have identical or greater precipitation levels compared to Mumbai.

Although there have been floods in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the degree of calamity has never been this high.

So, if not the quantum of rainfall, what is it about Mumbai that has turned it into such a different picture post heavy showers?



The torrential rainfall in Mumbai this year was due to a clearly defined low-pressure area over the region of Mumbai which attracted more rain. Besides, the situation has been worsened by the high tide. Some parts of Mumbai have received more than **200mm of rain** (<http://www.imdmumbai.gov.in/>) in last 24 hours which is unusually high.

But the catastrophe in which Mumbai stands today is unique.

The financial capital of India was once a group of seven islands which has now become one landmass by the linking and reclaiming of land; the water bodies which used to drain the monsoon water got choked and a new drainage system — surface and underground drainage — was developed.

This drainage network discharge (http://forestsclearance.nic.in/writereaddata/Addinfo/0_0_1112123912121BRIMSTOWADreportonStormWaterDrainage.pdf)s sewage water the into city creeks, river and straight into the Arabian sea.



Mithi river which used to drain out excess rainwater from the city is clogged with waste, floods are inevitable with a heavy downpour. Photo Source: India Water Portal
(<http://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/mithi-recounting-rivers-apathectic-journey>)

One of the main channels of the drainage system in Mumbai is Mithi river which today has been reduced to a filthy sewage by the dumping of raw sewage, industrial and municipal waste. The catchment area of the river has also been reduced with encroachment over embankment.

Now that Mithi river which used to drain out excess rainwater from the city is clogged with waste, floods are inevitable with a heavy downpour. Mangroves on the coastline, which also used to mitigate the floods, have largely disappeared, leaving Mumbai unprotected from torrential rains.



Image: (L)- Mumbai My Heart/ Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Mumbaimyheartt>); (R)- Kishore Kadam/ Twitter (<https://twitter.com/kishorkdm00>)

Therefore, it is not simple to explain why Mumbai stands still so often after a heavy shower. The Mumbai floods are not just an act of God, but a culmination of several man-made problems. They draw attention towards an urgent need for planning in the city of dreams.

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