KERALA DISASTER 2018

In late July 2018, severe flooding affected the Indian state of Kerala due to unusually high rainfall during the monsoon season. It was the worst flooding in Kerala in nearly a century.[2] Over 373 people died[3] within a fortnight, while at least 280,679[3][4] people were evacuated, mainly from Chengannur,[5]Pandanad,[6] Aranmula, Aluva, Chalakudy, Kuttanad and Pandalam. All 14 districts of the state were placed on high alert.[7][8] According to the Kerala government, one-sixth of the total population of Kerala had been directly affected by the floods and related incidents.[9]

Thirty-five out of the forty-two dams within the state were opened for the first time in history. All five overflow gates of the Idukki Dam were opened at the same time, for the first time in 26 years.[10] Heavy rains in Wayanad and Idukki have caused severe landslides and have left the hilly districts isolated.[11][9] The situation was regularly monitored by the Prime Minister and the National Crisis Management Committee coordinated the rescue and relief operations.[12]

There was a controversy following the Ministry of External Affairs' refusal to allow the Kerala Government to accept help from the Government of the UAE. The MEA position is that as per the existing foreign policy, assistance cannot be sought from foreign governments,[13] but that NGOs and PIOs world wide may donate.[14][15] Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan argued that the existing policy did not require India to reject aid from a foreign government

Causes

Kerala received heavy monsoon rainfall on the mid evening of August 8 resulting in dams filling to capacity; in the first 24 hours of rainfall the state received 310 mm (12 in) of rain.[17] Almost all dams have been opened since the water level has risen close to overflow level due to heavy rainfall, flooding local low-lying areas.[18] For the first time in the state's history, 35 of its 42 dams have been opened.[19]

Most of the regions affected by this monsoon were classified as ecologically-sensitive zones (ESZs) by the the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, the Gadgil Committee. Most of the recommendations and directions by the commitee was either neglected or rejected. Chairman of the

committee Madhav Gadgil accused the state government and its irresponsible environmental policy for the recent landslides and floods. He called it a "man-made calamity".[20][21][22]

The state government of Kerala argued in the Supreme Court that the sudden release of water from the Mullaperiyar Dam by the Tamil Nadu government was one of the reasons for the devastating flood in Kerala.[9]

Impact

A state official told AFP that 370 people have died, while the *The Economic Times* has reported that 33,000 people have been rescued.[7][23][24] The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority has placed the state in a red alert as a result of the intense flooding.[25] A number of water treatment plants were forced to cease pumping water, resulting in poor access to clean water, especially in northern districts of the state.[26] Over 5,645 relief camps[3] have been opened at various locations to accommodate the flood victims. It is estimated that 1,247,496 people[3] have found shelter in such camps.[27][28] The flooding has affected hundreds of villages, destroyed an estimated 10,000 km (6,200 mi) of roads and thousands of homes have been damaged or destroyed.[25] The Government has cancelled Onam celebrations, whose allocated funds have been reallocated to relief efforts.[29]