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NDSA report on Medigadda may take more time



A team of experts collecting samples for testing at Medigadda.

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

Final report on the multi-disciplinary investigation taken up by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) into the structural issues of Medigadda and two other barrages of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, cannot be expected any time before December.

Its recommendations for the full-scale rehabilitation of the project were expected within three to four months when it was tasked with the investigation. But as these recommendations are to be correlated with the findings of the ongoing studies entrusted to three other central organisations, the process is likely to take more time.

One of the three organisations, which were entrusted with the fresh studies on the three barrages, has just started its job. The Central Soil and Materials Research Station (CSMRS), one of the three agencies whose services were drafted for this purpose, is yet to reach Medigadda barrage. Reports on their stud-

The Authority's recommendations are to be correlated with the findings of three other central organisations

ies cannot be expected before September next.

The NDSA was tasked with sub-surface study of Medigadda in March. A pair of piers that were found to have drifted from their ordinal location on October 21 last year resulted in opening up huge cracks in the structure. Some seepage issues were spotted in Annaram and Sundilla barrages. Such issues have to be addressed only on the basis of in-depth studies. The NDSA submitted the interim report responding to the directions given by the judicial commission investigating the Medigadda issue as a parallel exercise. Even that report is not of help for the department, officials said. Precious work time was also lost in the process.

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Now that the inflows into the barrages were on the rise, there is hardly any scope to continue the works in the riverbed. The three barrages were emptied in March to facilitate the investigations.

But all three barrages are set to receive heavy inflows in the next one week to ten days. Major part of the interim work is yet to be completed.

The lifting of all the gates of the barrage at Medigadda was being carried out taking all precautionary measures after completion of the pressure grouting process.

One of the 85 gates, in respect of which, issues continued to persist, was totally removed.

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Inequitable impacts of climate change

As with any environmental disaster, the impact of heat is profoundly dictated by privilege



CHIRAG DHARA

The world's largest elections unfolded in India during April and May 2024, with nearly 970 million registered voters. Daytime temperatures have been scorching across India and there are concerns the extreme heat in these two months may have played a role in the lower-than-usual voter turnout.

On May 25, during the sixth voting phase, day-time temperatures soared above 35 degrees Celsius across most of the country, with north-western regions of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan blistering at 45 degrees Celsius and above. More alarmingly, nights have offered little respite, with night-time temperatures remaining stubbornly high at 28-30 degrees Celsius across vast parts of the country, including major cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.

The Global Context

This year's extreme heat in India is neither a random occurrence nor an isolated one. Globally, the last 11 consecutive months — June 2023 to April 2024 — have broken temperature records for each corresponding month. Late 2023 and the first months of 2024 have shattered global temperature records. Among the most severe consequences of the rise in global temperatures is the surge in extreme heat events worldwide. These foreshadow severe impacts on health, lives and livelihoods, particularly in tropical developing countries like India, with high baseline temperatures and high heat exposure.

Hot Days and its Impacts

Observational records show the summer heat this year is part of a trend, il-



lustrated by the increased number of days each year where the maximum temperature exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. Northwest, central and southeastern parts of the country have witnessed the highest rise, with much of Rajasthan and Telangana and parts of Karnataka and Andhra experiencing an additional two weeks each year of temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. Many other parts of the country, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and the rest of Andhra, endure at least one additional week of this extreme heat.

As with any environmental disaster, the impact of this additional heat is profoundly dictated by privilege. While the upper-middle classes retreat into air-conditioned refuges during extreme heat, there is little recourse for those less privileged.

Among the most exposed are essential workers such as farmers, construction labourers, sanitation workers, drivers, small business and informal economy workers (such as security guards and street vendors) and gig economy workers (such as food delivery agents).

Without proactive and well-thought-out risk mitigation, the increasing heat

will place outdoor wage earners in a difficult bind: they risk kidney failure, cardiovascular diseases and heat strokes by working through extreme heat. However, reducing work during the hottest hours risks wage cuts and job losses. This has already manifested this summer with online commerce companies grappling with a sharp decline in the availability of delivery agents who are forced to stop work during the hottest hours.

Impact on Health

A more insidious trend in recent years is the persistence of high overnight temperatures. Cool night-time temperatures are crucial to enable the body to recover from oppressive day-time heat. When night-time temperatures remain

The increasing heat places outdoor wage earners in a difficult bind, and reducing work during the hottest hours risks wage cuts and job losses

high, this recovery process is hindered.

Rising mortality rates following hot nights have been documented globally. Yet, the risks posed by excessive night-time heat are often overlooked. India Meteorological Department data reveals that the extreme night-time heat of May 25 across India is consistent with a rising trend in many parts of the country. Once again, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and coastal parts of Andhra and Tamil Nadu have seen the most conspicuous rise, with one or two additional weeks of hot nights per year.

Those at greatest risk are the least privileged: those without air-conditioning, more prominently street-dwellers. Not only do they face the most exposure, but they are also least likely to have access to adequate medical care. The outlook is grim. Extreme temperatures are projected to rise considerably in India over the next few decades.

India's regional climate change report has assessed a rise of nearly 2 degrees Celsius by mid-century in day- and night-time temperatures (under the moderate emissions scenario, Representative Concentration Pathway 4.5 (RCP4.5), relative to the 1976-2005 period). This increase will severely exacerbate the already extreme conditions experienced today.

The varying manifestations and impacts of global heating make it a great unequaliser. Privilege enables luxury consumption that drives greenhouse gas emissions, and it simultaneously shields those possessing it from the worst ravages of climate change. These observations prompt deeper questions beyond the personal: if extreme heat has indeed played a role in depressing voter turnout in this election cycle, was it shaped along lines of privilege?

How might consequences such as heat-induced crop failures shape voting choices? Can these factors nudge the political trajectory of nations? In other words, the question is whether the inequitable impacts of climate change can permeate beyond tangible aspects like livelihoods and health to more abstract realms such as democratic participation.

These are complex questions without easy answers but serve to underscore how climate change can disrupt our societies in nuanced ways.

As the world's largest democracy, India inarguably has the greater responsibility to grapple with these questions. A start would be to move the election cycle to cooler months.

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