

A call for integrated flood management

What is the issue?

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• Due to the onset of northeast monsoon, Chennai is seriously worried with flooding concerns.

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 It is clear that Chennai needs integrated flood management, especially the revival of lakes and water tanks.

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What is the present scenario?

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- Chennai is a lower elevation coastal city with a very high population density. $\ensuremath{\sc vn}$
- The torrential rains are exceeding the normal by 93% in the period of four days from November 1 leaving residents in a state of despair. \n
- Flood waters stranded people in the rapidly growing suburban housing clusters, with many having to flee to safer places fearing a deluge as in 2015. \n
- There have been efforts to alleviate immediate misery through the distribution of relief materials in some places. \n
- The larger issue of how the city deals with flood and drought cycles remains unaddressed.

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What are the shortfalls in planning?

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• Many traditional lakes and canals that existed in the city's core a century ago

to absorb the intense downpour are left unpreserved.

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- Successive governments have allowed the mindless draining of wetlands and their conversion into expensive real estate, with catastrophic consequences. \n
- Regrettably, the great flood two years ago has not yielded a policy course correction.

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 Poor waste management is exacerbating the problem by blocking drains, canals and lakes.

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- At the same time it is also noted that ill-planned road projects are blocking smooth flow of excess water. \n

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What should be done?

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- The state government must move beyond the creation of weak storm water drains to an <u>integrated flood management system</u>.
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- Chennai should return to the <u>traditional wisdom of creating tanks and lakes</u> for water storage.
- More importantly, <u>old silted ones have to be rejuvenated</u>, in order to harvest the floods and replenish the depleted groundwater.
- Involving the community to monitor the health of the tanks and lakes can keep out encroachers, who are often protected by patron-politicians. \n
- The deficit of good housing and $\underline{civic\ infrastructure}\ must\ actively\ be addressed and remedial structures should be built for existing localities.$ $<math display="inline">\n$

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Source: The Hindu

