

July 2023
Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Synopsis (UDAS)
Monthly Reports

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About UDAS Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Synopsis (UDAS) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAS reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAS is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAS neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We, therefore, see UDAS as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need of a holistic disaster management and accident minimization policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAS will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the process of planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.

1. July 2023 : Joshimath “sinking” update

Unplanned infrastructure development, inadequate drainage and excavation of roads through unstable debris slopes accelerated the instability and land subsidence in the historical Himalayan town of Joshimath in Uttarakhand. These are the findings in the study “Unstable Slopes and threatened livelihoods of the historical Joshimath town, Uttarakhand Himalaya, India” published in the latest edition of Current Science journal.

The study was conducted by Indian geologists and scientists between August 2022 and January 2023 when the region reported land subsidence resulting in the evacuation of the locals from their houses.

As per the findings of the report, in the last few decades Joshimath has witnessed a significant surge in population resulting in huge infrastructure development. This has caused immense pressure on the finite resources and limited accommodation space on precariously balanced vulnerable slopes.

The report went on to add that in the last few decades, Uttarakhand Himalaya has witnessed large-scale infrastructure development activities, particularly the proliferation of urban towns driven by the increase in urban population up to 20 times between 1901 and 2011. Such a rapid rate of urbanisation, if executed in an unplanned manner, is likely to create an additional burden on existing resources and infrastructure, adversely impacting the mountain ecology and terrain instability.

Therefore, the report concluded that it is important to assess the emerging risks and vulnerabilities associated with growth of infrastructure on precariously stabilised slopes, particularly in the Higher Himalaya, said the authors.

Unplanned dev sank Joshimath, people's livelihood: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unplanned infrastructure development, inadequate drainage and excavation of roads through unstable debris slopes accelerated the instability and land subsidence in the historical Himalayan town of Joshimath in Uttarakhand. These are the findings in the study "Unstable slopes and threatened livelihoods of the historical Joshimath town, Uttarakhand Himalaya, India", published in the latest edition of Current Science journal.

The study was conducted by Indian geologists and scientists between August 2022 and January 2023 when the region reported land subsidence resulting in the evacuation of the locals from their houses. SP Sati, a senior geologist and head of department of basic and social science, College of Forestry, Ranichauri said, "As an im-

mediate measure, there should not be any excavation activities, particularly of the precariously balanced crystalline boulders. The landslide deposits contain moderately fine grains (pebbly sand), which act as the filling material between the boulders.

"It has been observed that there are cavities (mimicking potholes) on the surface which we speculate are caused due to the selective removal of fine sediments by unregulated domestic wastewater drainage. In recent times, these cavities are posing a serious threat to the stability of the built-up structures in Joshimath town."

Authors Maria Asim and Shubhra Sharma from Department of Geography, Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University were of the views that since the roads at various zones in the region were undergoing subsidence at mul-



tiples places, special engineering skills is required while excavating the slopes for road construction, which are currently lacking. "Consequently, our response to maintaining the roads in such areas is reactive (repair following subsidence) and not proactive (providing long-term slope stability)."

One of the ways to circum-

vent this chronic problem of continuous creeping and subsidence is by making elevated corridors with pillars deeply anchored on hard rock substratum, as done for the ropeway in Joshimath town, they said.

The other authors of the study include, YP Sundriyal from Department of Geology, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar, Naresh Rana from the Department of Geology, Centre

for Advance Studies, University of Delhi and Vijay Bahuguna who works with Department of History, VSKC, Govt PG College in Dehradun. Shubhra Sharma is currently in the Geosciences Division, Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad.

The fragile town, in the last few decades witnessed significant surge in population resulting into huge infrastructure development. Thus causing immense pressure on the finite resources and limited accommodation space on precariously balanced vulnerable slopes.

For example, multi-storied houses in the Yamuna and Bhagirathi valleys are hundreds of years old and have withstood several earthquakes, including the 1991 Uttarkashi and 1999 Chamoli events, said the study.

Similarly, the traditional irrigation system in the hills is based on small canal networks

which are diverted from small to moderate streams without obstructing them. This type of irrigation is still in practice.

However, in the last few decades, Uttarakhand Himalaya has witnessed large-scale infrastructural developmental activities, particularly the proliferation of urban towns driven by the increase in urban population up to 20 times between 1901 and 2011. Such a rapid rate of urbanization, if executed in an unplanned manner, is likely to create an additional burden on existing resources and infrastructure, adversely impacting the mountain ecology and terrain instability.

Therefore, it is important to assess the emerging risks and vulnerabilities associated with growth of infrastructure on precariously stabilised slopes, particularly in the Higher Himalaya, said the authors.

A six feet deep hole appeared in a field, according to an eyewitness, sparking fresh fears of geological instability due to the monsoon rains. Vinod Saklani, a resident of Sunil ward in Joshimath said that he discovered the hole in a small field near his house. The Saklani family was among the first in the town to see cracks develop in their house two years ago. The situation aggravated in early January this year in 2023.

The Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (JBSS), a citizens collective pressing for speedy rehabilitation of those affected by the Joshimath land subsidence resumed its agitation on July 3 and held a day long protest at the towns tehsil premises, alleging non action by the government over their 11 point demand list. The residents alleged that the government has not moved an inch even as the situation was poised to become grave in Joshimath, especially with the monsoon season entering its peak.

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PIONEER

संघर्ष समिति ने एसडीएम के माध्यम से मुख्यमंत्री को ज्ञापन भेजा जोशीमठ में ताजा दरारों से दहशत, लोगों का धरना

ज्ञापन सौंपा

जोशीमठ, संवाददाता। उत्तराखंड में भूधंसाव प्रभावित जोशीमठ नगर में ताजा दरारों से लोगों में दहशत है। जोशीमठ बचाओ संघर्ष समिति ने सोमवार को प्रभावितों की समस्याओं को लेकर तहसील परिसर में धरना दिया। एक दिवसीय ध्यानाकर्षण धरना देकर एसडीएम के माध्यम से मुख्यमंत्री को ज्ञापन भेजा।

जोशीमठ में लोगों की मुश्किलें कम होने का नाम नहीं ले रही हैं। ताजा घटनाक्रम में सुनील वाई में विनोद सकलानी के मकान के पीछे गहरा गड्ढा हो गया, यह लगभग छह फुट गहरा था। इस भर दिया गया है। वहीं मनोहरबाग में नगर पालिका के हल्का मोटर वाहन मार्ग में मोटी दरारें आई हैं। संघर्ष समिति के प्रवक्ता कमला रतूड़ी ने बताया कि सरकार के सामने 11 बिंदुओं पर मांग रखी है, लेकिन सरकार कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठा रही है। इस कारण लोगों में आक्रोश है। मानसून के दौरान लोगों



जोशीमठ तहसील में मांगों को लेकर सोमवार को धरना देते स्थानीय लोग। • हिन्दुस्तान

आपदा प्रभावित की ये हैं प्रमुख मांगें

पूरे नगर जोशीमठ को आपदा प्रभावित घोषित करते हुए प्रभावितों के नुकसान की भरपाई की जाए, सरकार द्वारा जनवरी माह में नगर के सर्वे हेतु बनाई सभी आठों एजेंसियों की जांच रिपोर्ट सार्वजनिक की जाए, बेघर लोगों का स्थाई विस्थापन नहीं होने तक वैकल्पिक व्यवस्था की जाए, एनटीपीसी के साथ वर्ष 2010 में हुए समझौते को लागू किया जाए, तपोवन विष्णुगाड़ परियोजना और हेलंग मारवाडी वाईपास निर्माण पर रोक लगाई जाए, एक निगरानी कमेटी बनाई जाए, उसमें संघर्ष समिति के लोगों को रखा जाए आदि।

का डर बढ़ने लगा है। नगर में कहीं-कहीं नई दरारें आने की सूचनाएं हैं। यदि सरकार ने मांगें नहीं मानी तो आगे के आंदोलन की रणनीति बनाई जाएगी। संघर्ष समिति के संयोजक अतुल संती ने कहा कि वैज्ञानिकों की

अध्ययन रिपोर्ट को सार्वजनिक नहीं किया जा रहा है। सरकार इसे सार्वजनिक करे। वहीं रविवार को जोशीमठ पहुंचे गढ़वाल सांसद तीरथ सिंह रावत को भी संघर्ष समिति ने मांगपत्र सौंपा था।

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HINDUSTAN

After the monsoon rains, the authorities will begin the retrofitting of houses/buildings which have small cracks and are located on "safe land" according to senior officials of the state government. A four member committee has been constituted at the government level to prepare a bid document to invite a third party company for retrofitting.

According to Piyoosh Rautela, Executive Director, Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) who is one of the members of the Committee, "Of the total 2364 units, 34 are totally dilapidated, 482 are unsafe for human habitation, 984 can be repaired after investigation and 864 are completely safe. This has come months after a team of 15 member NDMA team arrived in Joshimath for the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) which is an internationally accepted methodology for determining the physical damages, economic losses and costs of meeting recovery needs after a natural disaster through a government led process.

As per Atul Sati, convener of JBSS "Cracks continue to appear in new places across the town. In the already affected places, they continue to increase. But the administration doesn't seem to be serious about it despite repeated letters. In case of excessive rainfall, the situation will worsen".

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HINDUSTAN
TIMES

[JOSHIMATH]

Geologists to examine fresh crack on road

HT Correspondent

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DEHRADUN: A group of geologists will examine a long new crack that surfaced on the Joshimath-Auli road, the Chamoli administration said on Wednesday.

Joshimath sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Kumkum Joshi said, "We have communicated to the geologists about the new crack on the Joshimath-Auli road. The geologists will examine the crack soon."

Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti convenor Atul Sati said, "Cracks continue to appear in new places across the town. In the already affected places, they continue to increase. But administration doesn't seem to be serious about it despite repeated letters. In case of excessive rainfall, the situation will worsen."

In June, local residents under the banner of JBSS met district magistrate (DM) Himanshu Khurana at the district headquarters in Gopeshwar recently over possible threats to the town during monsoon rains and II-point "unfulfilled" demands. Sati said, "Nothing has been done about our concerns."

Authorities had earlier this month said they will begin retrofitting of houses/buildings which have small cracks and are located on "safe" land after the monsoon rains.

Retrofitting involves making structures more resistant to seismic activity.

A four-member committee was constituted at the government level to prepare a bid document (draft) to invite a third-party company for retrofitting.

Piyosh Rautela, executive director, Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA), who is one of the members of the committee, said, "A four-member committee has been constituted at the government level to prepare the bid document (draft) to invite a third-party company."

He said, "Of the total 2,364 affected houses, 34 are totally dilapidated, 482 are unsafe for human habitation, 984 can be repaired after investigation, and 864 are completely safe."

The move for retrofitting came months after a team of 15-member National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)



Cracks continue to appear in new places across the town (Joshimath). In the already affected places, they continue to increase

ATUL SATI, Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti convenor

team arrived in Joshimath for the post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA). PDNA is an internationally accepted methodology for determining the physical damages, economic losses, and costs of meeting recovery needs after a natural disaster through a government-led process.

Following the PDNA, the houses/buildings were classified into different categories on the basis of their condition, according to officials.

Compared to Uttarakhand which receives an average annual rainfall of 1,162.7 mm, Chamoli reports 1,230.8. During last year's monsoon when the state received 1,128.0 mm rainfall (June-September), Chamoli was one of the two districts among the state's 13 districts, which received highest rainfall. Chamoli received 1,196.4 mm. As a larger part of Chamoli district is situated on the southern slopes of the outer Himalayas, monsoon currents penetrate through trenced valleys, with rainfall reaching its maximum in the monsoon season that spans between June and September.

Chamoli district, where Joshimath falls, has a history of extreme rainfall events, with the Indian Meteorological Department IMD rainfall data for hundred years (1901-2000) stating Chamoli received 537.9 mm rainfall in July 2013, which was the second highest recorded rainfall in the district since 1901-2000, and 2008-2013. The maximum rainfall of 860.7 mm in the 100-year period was reported in September 1924. The February 2021 Chamoli tragedy near Rani village, which is just 20 km from Joshimath, shows how vulnerable the area is to disasters.

2. July 19, 2023 : Namami Gange STP Electrocutation in Chamoli District

Sixteen people, including a police sub-inspector and three home guard jawans were killed, and eleven others were injured after they were electrocuted on the banks of the Alaknanda river at a Namami Gange project site in Chamoli district on July 19, 2023 in the morning hours. Of the eleven injured, six people have been airlifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh, while five others are being treated at the district hospital in Gopeshwar, 10 kilometres away from the accident site.

NK Joshi, district disaster management officer, said that the incident took place at 11.35am. "Of the 11 injured, the condition of two people is said to be critical while the rest are stable," he said.

Magisterial probe ordered into 16 electrocution deaths in state

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DEHRADUN: Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the 16 electrocution deaths at the Namami Ganga project site on the banks of Alaknanda River in Chamoli district on Wednesday.

Sixteen people, including a sub-inspector and three home guard jawans, died and 11 were injured after getting electrocuted.

On the instructions of the CM, Chamoli district magistrate Himanshu Khurana has asked the additional district magistrate Chamoli to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident and submit his report within a week.

Dhami also announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh to the kin of the deceased and ₹1 lakh compensation to those injured in the incident.

NK Joshi, district disaster management officer Chamoli, said 15 people have died in the incident. "Of the 11 injured, six in severe condition were airlifted to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh. The remaining five were being treated at the district hospital in Gopeshwar, where the district headquarters is located," he said.

The deceased include Pramod Kumar, Pradeep Singh Rawat (sub-inspector), Deepak Kumar (home guard), Mukundi Ram, Sumit Aswal, Surendra Kumar, Devendra Mahendra Lal, Surendra Rawat, Sukhdev Das, Gopal Singh Bastwal (home guard), Sobat Lal (home guard), Yogendra (in charge Namami Ganga sewerage treatment plant), Vipin and Manoj Kumar.

Chamoli Circle officer Pramod Shah said a security guard of the project, Ganesh Lal, was first electrocuted and found dead in the morning. "When police and villagers arrived at the project site for panchnama, they were electrocuted while touching the side railing," he said.

The site is an under-construction Namami Ganga sewerage

treatment plant, which was set up in 2019.

According to eyewitnesses, after the security guard was found dead, many locals, family members of the guard, along with police reached the site for Panchnama. "When people touched the side railing, they immediately received a huge shock. There was confusion initially regarding what happened and how many people died. First, we thought people had just fainted. We could never imagine that so many people will die," said Raghu Verma, a resident of Chamoli.

Additional director general of police (Law and Order) V Murgesan said, "One sub-inspector and three home guards are among 15 deceased who died in the incident."

Following the incident, CM Dhami flew from Dehradun to Chamoli. However, his Chopper couldn't land in Chamoli due to bad weather and he returned to Dehradun.

Before leaving for Chamoli, Dhami tweeted, "I am leaving for on-the-spot inspection of the extremely heartbreaking accident in Chamoli. My condolences are with the bereaved families, in this hour of crisis our government stands firmly with the family members of accident-affected people".

"Extremely painful news has been received of many casualties due to electrocution in Chamoli... A magisterial inquiry has been ordered into this unfortunate incident. I pray to God for peace to the departed souls and speedy recovery of the injured."

State health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said he was in touch with all officials concerned for coordination between various agencies.

Officials aware of the developments said Union home minister Amit Shah also called the CM Dhami and enquired about the Chamoli incident. He told the Union home minister that the injured have been airlifted to AIIMS Rishikesh by a helicopter. The PMO has also been informed about the incident.



Six critically injured were airlifted from Chamoli to AIIMS Rishikesh on Wednesday.

HT PHOTO

Cong questions power supply even after tragedy, demands strict action

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DEHRADUN: While raising questions over the power supply which continued even after the electrocution of the security guard, Congress state president Karana Mahara has demanded a high-level inquiry into the accident, action against the culprits, immediate compensation to affected family members and a government job to one family member, people familiar with the matter said.

Mahara expressed his deep condolences to the bereaved families. He said that in this heart-wrenching accident, 15 people have died and many have been seriously injured.

Expressing condolences on the death of NSUI worker Sumit Aswal in the accident, Mahara expressed condolences to his family. He said Sumit Aswal was a good worker of the Con-

gress party whose death caused irreparable damage to the party. "All of us are equal partners in this hour of grief with all the affected families", he said.

Mahara alleged that there was gross negligence by the officials concerned. "When a person has died of electrocution, the power supply should have been immediately stopped. At a time when heavy rains are lashing the state, strict security arrangements should have been made while working on such projects", he said.

Mahara said he has also instructed a delegation of Congressmen under the leadership of district Congress committee president Mukesh Negi to take stock of the situation at the incident site and reach out to family members of the victims for any help.

Manveer Singh Chouhan, state BJP media in charge said that Congress instead of supporting the government at the

time of such tragedies, starts politicising the issue and attacking the government.

"When we came to know state party president Mahendra Bhatt and chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami left for the spot by helicopter but had to return due to bad weather. Bhatt inquired about the relief work from the district administration and also instructed the local party workers to help in the relief work. Bhatt then reached to AIIMS Rishikesh to inquire about the condition of the injured".

He said that chief minister Dhami has already announced an inquiry into the incident.

"Whoever is guilty in this incident will not be spared. No one can make up for the loss of those who lost their loved ones in this accident. State government and the organisation are standing with them in this hour of grief," he said.

By 9.30am, a crowd had gathered near the spot where Lal's body was discovered, that included locals, his family and security personnel. Two hours later, they were still there with the personnel holding inquest proceedings. "Around 11.30am, the police and the villagers that were at the site conducting the panchnama (an inquest report) were electrocuted when they touched the side railing," said Chamoli circle officer Pramod Shah.

Eyewitnesses said that those who died were in contact with a steel railing that runs alongside the treatment plant and all of them received a huge shock. "There was pandemonium. People just collapsed and we thought people had fainted. We never imagined that so many people would die," said Raghu Sharma, a Chamoli resident.



मौत का कहर

■ यूपीसीएल ने जल संस्थान पर फोड़ा हादसे का टीकरा ■ जल संस्थान के अफसर कुछ बोलने को तैयार नहीं

सवाल: सोलह मौत का गुनहगार कौन?

चमोली, मुख्य संवाददाता। चमोली में एसटीपी परिसर में करंट दौड़ने के बाद 16 लोगों की मौत का गुनहगार कौन है? लोग इसका जवाब चाहते हैं। लेकिन अब तक इसका स्पष्ट जवाब किसी के पास नहीं है। एसटीपी से जुड़े महकमे एक-दूसरे को दोषी ठहराने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं या फिर चुप्पी साध गए हैं। कोई अपनी गलती मानने को तैयार नहीं है। यूपीसीएल जहां जल संस्थान पर हादसे का टीकरा फोड़ा रहा है, वहीं जल संस्थान के अफसर खुल कर कुछ बोलने को तैयार नहीं हैं।

तकनीकी जानकार मान रहे हैं कि जब सुबह जेई व अन्य लोग एसटीपी परिसर में पहुंचे, तो मौके पर पैनेल जला हुआ था। पंप हाउस का कनेक्शन बंद किया गया। हालांकि सूत्र बता रहे हैं कि एलटी पैनेल ही नहीं जला, बल्कि सर्वो स्टेबलाइजर भी खाक हो गया। यह मौके पर गए लोगों को दिखा होगा। त्रिजली का मीटर व पोल से मीटर तक कनेक्शन सही है। यह देखते ही जल संस्थान के इंजीनियरों को समझ जाना चाहिए था कि ये शार्ट सर्किट का सामान्य मामला नहीं है। तत्काल इसकी यूपीसीएल को सूचना देनी चाहिए थी। परिसर को खाली करके सील कर देना चाहिए था। उल्टा परिसर में भीड़ जमा होने दी गई। यूपीसीएल के इंजीनियर कह रहे हैं कि उन्हें रात में करंट लगने

ऐसे सवाल, जिनका नहीं है अफसरों के पास जवाब

- 1 जब एक कर्मचारी की करंट लगने से मौत हो गई थी, तो क्यों तत्काल पूरे परिसर की लाइन नहीं काटी गई?
- 2 जल संस्थान के एसटीपी के एलटी पैनेल व स्टेबलाइजर पूरी तरह खाक जो चुके थे, तो मौके पर पहुंचे इंजीनियरों ने उस पर ध्यान क्यों नहीं दिया?
- 3 यूपीसीएल ने फाल्ट दूर करने के बाद लाइन चालू करते ही जल संस्थान से बात क्यों नहीं की और एसटीपी परिसर का स्टिच ऑन क्यों किया गया?



चमोली में बुधवार को एसटीपी परिसर में करंट की चपेट में आए लोगों के शवों को घटनास्थल से लाते पुलिस के जवान। • हिन्दुस्तान

वाले हादसे की जानकारी नहीं दी गई। जल संस्थान का कहना है कि एक कर्मचारी की मौत की सूचना दे दी थी। इसके बाद भी लाइन चालू करने के दौरान यूपीसीएल व जल संस्थान के इंजीनियरों के बीच समन्वय नहीं रहा। इससे फॉल्ट दूर करने के बाद लाइन चालू कर दी गई और परिसर में करंट फेल गया। थोड़ी सी सावधानी बरती जाती और महकमों ने समन्वय से काम लिया होता तो हादसा टल सकता था।

यूपीसीएल का तर्क

यूपीसीएल के एमडी अनिल कुमार ने बताया, प्रथमदृष्टया मामला एसटीपी परिसर के अंदरूनी फॉल्ट से जुड़ा लग रहा है क्योंकि परिसर में लगे यूपीसीएल के मीटर और केबिल में फॉल्ट नहीं है। न इन दोनों में आग लगी है। हाईवोल्टेज का विषय होता, तो सबसे पहले केबिल और मीटर में ही आग लगती। फॉल्ट मीटर से आगे केबिल और अंदर परिसर में ही रहा।

हादसे को यूपीसीएल जिम्मेदार: कंपनी

एसटीपी चलाने वाली कंपनी कान्फिडेंट इंजीनियरिंग ने हादसे के लिए यूपीसीएल को जिम्मेदार बताया। कंपनी के मैनेजर भास्कर ने बताया कि प्लॉट में 415 वोल्ट की बिजली सप्लाय होती है। बुधवार सुबह चार हजार से अधिक वोल्ट बिजली सप्लाय हुई। इसी के बाद ये हादसा हुआ।

जल संस्थान चुप

उधर, हादसे के कारणों पर जल संस्थान के अफसर बोलने को तैयार नहीं। सीजीएम नीलिमा गर्ग ने कहा कि हादसे का कारण जांच के बाद पता चलेगा। हालांकि अधिशासी अभियंता संजय श्रीवास्तव ने कहा कि यदि 440 वोल्ट का करंट होता, तो इतना बड़ा हादसा नहीं होता। साफ है कि कहीं न कहीं 11 हजार केवी की लाइन से करंट फैला है, शेष जांच में साफ होगा।

UPCL officials said that prima facie electricity was leaking through the internal wiring of the STP, coursing through the railing and other equipment and there was no transformer blast. Officials from the agency traded allegations with the Jal Sansthan, the department in charge of the STP, accusing them of not giving them information that an electrocution incident had taken place earlier in the morning. Officials of the Jal Sansthan however said that while they would hold an internal inquiry, it was the UPCL that should have known there was an electrical fault, particularly as Lal had been killed through a likely electric shock before the incident at 11.30am.

Within hours of the accident, Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami ordered a magisterial inquiry. An official statement by district magistrate, Chamoli, Himanshu Khurana said, "According to the information received today on July 19, some people lost their lives due to electrocution at approximately 11.30am at the Namami Gange project in Chamoli. A magisterial inquiry is absolutely necessary, and I nominate Dr Abhishek Tripathi, additional district magistrate, Chamoli, to hold the magisterial investigation."

The magisterial probe into the Chamoli electrocution incident found that non compliance of electrical safety standards, including improper earthing and non installation of suitable moulded case circuit breaker (MCCB) at the Gopeshwar STP by the operating joint venture

company led to the tragedy on July 19, 2023 in which 16 people lost their lives and many others were injured.

Patiala-based Jai Bhushan Malik Contractors and Coimbatore-based Confident Engineering India, the two firms operating and maintaining the treatment plant in Uttarakhand and elsewhere in the country should be blacklisted, Chamoli additional district magistrate Abhishek Tripathi recommended in his magisterial report.

“We found two main reasons for the Chamoli electrocution – improper earthing system and non-installation of MCCB (moulded case circuit breaker) at the STP,” Tripathi said. “I have also recommended blacklisting of the joint venture companies all over the country. I have also recommended departmental action against the concerned officials of Jal Sansthan (water supply) and Uttarakhand Power Corporation.” There was no proper monitoring of the joint venture company’s work and there was lack of coordination between the water and power suppliers, he added. The probe also found invoices presented to the Jal Sansthan by the company were suspicious.

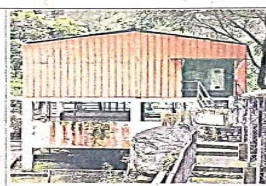
एसटीपी हादसे के लिए कंपनियां ऊर्जा निगम व जल संस्थान दोषी

राज्य खरो, देहरादून: नमावि गंगे परियोजना के अंतर्गत चमोली में बने सीवेज शोधन संयंत्र (एसटीपी) के संचालन में गंभीर लापरवाही बरती गई। जिम्मा संभाल रही कंपनी ने हर स्तर पर अनुबंध की शर्तों का उल्लंघन किया। अप्रशिक्षित कर्मियों से काम लेने के साथ ही संयंत्र में विद्युत सुरक्षा के पर्याप्त इंतजाम तक नहीं थे। यही नहीं, जिन विभागों के पास इसकी देखरेख की जिम्मेदारी थी, उनके अधिकारी भी आंखें मूंदे रहे। इसी लापरवाही के कारण 19 जुलाई को इस संयंत्र में करंट फैलने से 16 व्यक्तियों की जान चली गई और 11 अन्य झुलस गए थे। हादसे की मजिस्ट्रेटी जांच में ये निष्कर्ष निकालकर सामने आए हैं।

रिपोर्ट में इसे बेहद गंभीर मानते हुए ज्वाइंट वेंचर कंपनियों के साथ ही अनधिकृत रूप से काम करने वाली कंपनी को उत्तराखंड समेत पूरे देश में काली सूची में डालने, उसकी बैंक गारंटी जब्त करने के साथ ही जिम्मेदार विभागों के विरुद्ध सख्त कार्रवाई की संस्तुति की गई है। एसटीपी का संचालन ज्वाइंट वेंचर कंपनी के रूप में कॉन्फिडेंट इंजीनियरिंग इंडिया प्रा.लिमिटेड, कोयंबटूर तमिलनाडु व जयभूपण मलिक कंस्ट्रक्टर, पटियाला पंजाब कर रही थी। जबकि, दिल्ली की एक्सिस पावर कंट्रोल नामक कंपनी इस संयंत्र में अनधिकृत रूप से काम कर रही थी। इस बीच, राज्य सरकार ने ज्वाइंट वेंचर कंपनी की 1.10 करोड़ की बैंक गारंटी जब्त कर ली, उसे काली सूची में डालने की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ कर दी है। जब्त की गई राशि से भी व्यवस्था होने तक कंपनी को सौंपे गए 18 एसटीपी का संचालन किया जाएगा। सचिव पेयजल अरविंद छाकी ने इसकी पुष्टि की। मुख्यमंत्री के निर्देश पर

- तीनों ने हर स्तर पर बरती घोर लापरवाही, कंपनियों को काली सूची में डालने की तैयारी, बैंक गारंटी जब्त
- शासन को सीपी मजिस्ट्रेटी जांच रिपोर्ट में खोली गई है सिस्टम की फाट
- 19 जुलाई को सीवेज शोधन संयंत्र में करंट फैलने से चली गई थी 16 की जान

अब तक चार गिरफ्तारियां
चमोली एसटीपी हादसे के बाद राज्य उपनिरीक्षक की ओर से चमोली थाने में संचालक कंपनी और उसके कर्मियों के विरुद्ध गैर इरादतन हत्या और भारी गंभीरों के संचालन में लापरवाही का मुकदमा दर्ज कराया गया था। हालांकि, बाद में जांच के दायरे में ऊर्जा निगम जल संस्थान भी शामिल कर लिए गए। इस मामले में अब तक ऊर्जा निगम के लाइनमैन, जल संस्थान के सहायक अभियंता, संयंत्र संचालक कंपनी के सुपरवाइजर और अनधिकृत रूप से संयंत्र में कार्य कर रहे दिल्ली की कंपनी के निदेशक को गिरफ्तार किया जा चुका है।



अवेध रूप से जिम्मा संभाले थी दिल्ली की कंपनी
जांच रिपोर्ट में यह चौकाने वाला तथ्य भी सामने आया है कि दिल्ली की एक्सिस पावर कंट्रोल कंपनी का निदेशक भास्कर महाजन अवेध रूप से इस संयंत्र के संचालन की जिम्मेदारी संभाल रहा था। यह व्यक्ति न तो ज्वाइंट वेंचर में शामिल दोनों कंपनियों का कर्मिक था और न ही उसे अधिकृत किया गया था। उसके विरुद्ध भी कानूनी कार्रवाई की संस्तुति रिपोर्ट में की गई है।

मरम्मत के विलों में भी फर्जीवाड़े का संदेह
सीवेज शोधन संयंत्र के संचालन और मरम्मत से संबंधित विलों में भी फर्जीवाड़े का संदेह रिपोर्ट में उजाहा गया है। इस सिलसिले में जल संस्थान गोपेश्वर को प्रस्तुत किए गए विलों को संचालन मानते हुए इनका भुगतान करने वाली के विरुद्ध विभागीय कार्रवाई की संस्तुति की गई है।



चमोली में एसटीपी में हुए हादसे पर मजिस्ट्रेटी जांच की रिपोर्ट मिल गई है। इसके आधार पर कार्रवाई की जाएगी। विलों की कलाई नहीं बख्शा जाएगा। मामले में एफआइआर दर्ज की जा चुकी है। जिम्मेदारी तय करते हुए सख्त एक्शन लिया जा रहा है।
पुष्कर सिंह घाभी, मुख्यमंत्री

“By not complying with the electrical supply safety standards, not deploying adequate personnel at the STP, the joint venture company violated its agreement/contract with the Jal Nigam and Jal Sansthan,” the magisterial report said.

Appropriate punitive action should be taken against the joint venture company and one Bhaskar Mahajan, the report said. Departmental action should also be taken against concerned officials of Jal Sansthan, who failed to monitor the company’s work appropriately and cleared suspicious bills, it said. The report also recommended electricity safety audits of all sewage treatment plants so that such incidents could be avoided in the future.

{ CHAMOLI STP TRAGEDY }

Faulty earthing led to electrocution: Report

Amit Bathla

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DEHRADUN: The magisterial probe into the Chamoli electrocution incident has found that non-compliance of electrical safety standards, including improper earthing, and non-installation of suitable molded case circuit breaker (MCCB) at the Gopeshwar sewerage treatment plant (STP) by the operating joint venture company led to the tragedy on July 19.

HT has accessed the probe report submitted on Friday.

Sixteen people died and 12 were injured due to electrocution in the Chamoli electrocution incident.

Chamoli additional district magistrate (ADM) Abhishek Tripathi, who conducted the probe, recommended in his report blacklisting of Patiala-based Jai Bhushan Malik Contractors and Coimbatore-based Confident Engineering India Pvt. Ltd, the two firms which were operating and maintaining the STP, in Uttarakhand. The report also recommended the companies be blacklisted all over country by the appropriate authorities.

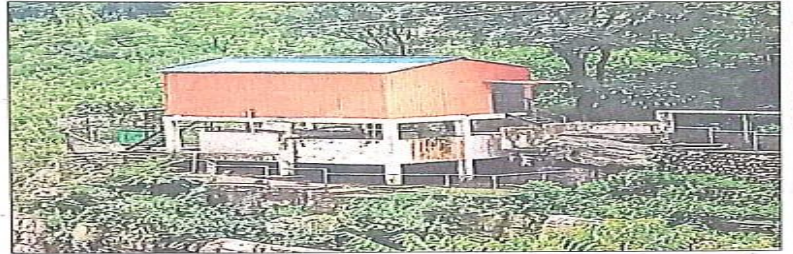
The report said, "Earthing system wasn't proper at the STP, resulting in a short circuit in the changeover panel and earthing fault in the control panel and main panel. When the short circuit occurred, the current spread in the iron structure and railing. A suitable molded case circuit breaker (MCCB) wasn't installed beyond the meter, instead a changeover was in use."

ADM Tripathi said, "We found two main reasons for the Chamoli electrocution - improper earthing system and non-installation of MCCB at the STP. I have recommended blacklisting of the joint venture company all over the country. I also recommended departmental action against the concerned officials of Jal Sansthan and Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL)."

There was no proper monitoring of the joint venture company's work, and there was lack of coordination between UPCL and Jal Sansthan, the report said.

The probe also found the bills presented to the Jal Sansthan by the company "suspicious".

"By not complying with the electrical supply safety standards, and not deploying adequate personnel at the STP, the joint venture company violated its agreement/contract with the



Sixteen people died due to electrocution at the Gopeshwar sewerage treatment plant in Chamoli district.

HT PHOTO

ADM RECOMMENDS BLACKLISTING OF TWO COMPANIES OPERATING THE SEWERAGE PLANT

Jai Nigam and Jal Sansthan," the report stated.

The report said Bhaskar Mahajan, director of Axis Power Controls, Delhi, wasn't an authorised person for the joint venture company but still was involved in the STP work, and recommended the blacklisting of the Axis Power Controls, Delhi.

In other recommendations, the ADM said the contract with the joint venture should be cancelled and all expenses and repair costs till the contract expiry should be recovered from the company. The bank guarantee of joint venture company amounting to ₹10.75 lakh, which is valid till July 31, 2023, should be confiscated, the report recommended.

The report also suggested appropriate legal punitive action against joint venture company, Bhaskar Mahajan and departmental action against officials concerned of Jal Sansthan who failed to monitor the company's work appropriately and paid suspicious bills given by the joint venture company.

Action has also been sought against Jal Sansthan and UPCL officials concerned for lack of coordination between the two government agencies.

The probe also recommended electricity safety audit of all STPs, so that a Chamoli-like incidents can be prevented.

The ADM on Friday submitted the report of the magisterial inquiry into the electrocution incident.

On the instructions of the

chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chamoli DM Himanshu Khurana had ordered the ADM to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident and submit his report within a week.

Four people have been arrested so far in connection with the incident.

The police on July 24 arrested one Bhaskar Mahajan, an official of the joint venture company handling the operation and maintenance of the sewerage treatment plant (STP).

On July 21 evening, the police had arrested three people in connection with the incident a day after the Chamoli police registered a case against the supervisor of a joint-venture firm outsourced for operation and maintenance of the sewerage treatment plant (STP) located on the banks of the Alaknanda Namami Gange scheme.

They were identified as Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan additional assistant engineer Hardev Lal, joint-venture company supervisor Pawan Chamola, and Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) lineman Mahendra Singh.

On July 20, a first information report (FIR) was registered under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the IPC and relevant sections of the Dangerous Machines (Regulation) Act, 1983, against Chamola and other unidentified officials of the joint venture.

The STP with a capacity of 0.5 megalitres per day was set up under the Namami Gange project in 2019 and handed over to the Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan in 2021 for supervision, with electricity provided to it by the Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL).

3. The temple sinking at Gopinath, Gopeshwar, Chamoli District

As reported in the June 2023 UDAS report, temple sinking reports had emerged from the Gopinath Mandir that is located in Gopeshwar in Chamoli district. Vyapar Sangh members and the head priest of the temple had escalated the matter to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and district authorities. ASI had refuted the tilting but agreed that some stones in the temple had been sinking and these would be replaced. Apart from this, the drainage system will be improved.

In the latest developments, a team of ASI recently found foul smelling sewage inside the sanctum sanctorum of the Gopinath temple, which it said is a serious threat to the sanctity of the 11th century shrine. The temple is the winter abode of Lord Rudranath, regarded as an incarnation of Shiva.

According to rules no construction can be allowed within 100 metres of any ASI protected monument. However, several houses were found to have been built all around the temple premises, very close to its boundary. ASI officials said they had written to the district


administration about the grave concern of waterlogging and damaged sewer lines near the temple, due to which sewage has reached the sanctum sanctorum.

17 JULY 2023
TIMES OF INDIA

Sewage from houses enters 11th century temple

Pankul Sharma
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Dehradun: A team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recently found foul-smelling sewage inside the sanctum sanctorum of the Gopinath temple at Gopeshwar in Chamoli district, which it said is a "serious threat to the sanctity of the 11th century shrine". The temple is the winter abode of Lord Rudranath, regarded as an incarnation of Shiva. The Rudranath temple is among the five temples of the Panch Kedar circuit, which includes Kedarnath.



The Gopinath temple is the winter abode of Lord Rudranath, regarded as an incarnation of Shiva and Tungnath.

According to rules, no construction can be allowed within 100 meters of any ASI-protected monument.

► Continued on P 4

ASI team suggests new drainage route for temple

► Continued from P1

However, several houses were found to have been built all around the temple premises very close to its boundary. ASI officials said they had written to the district administration about the "grave concern of waterlogging and damaged sewer line near the temple, due to which sewage has reached the garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum)".

Temple priest Harish Bhatt told TOI that the sewer line has been laid "in such a wrong manner that if someday it gets damaged, sewage of the entire city will fill the temple premises". "When it rained heavily, not only rain water, but sewage from the sewerage line also reached the jhaleri (extended area of the sanctum sanctorum)," he said. Superintending archaeologist of Dehradun circle, Manoj Saxena, who led a team to Gopeshwar to take a stock of the situation after locals alleged that the shrine was tilting, told TOI, "The temple hasn't been damaged as such due to the rains but sewage entering inside and the waterlogging there is a matter of grave concern. The water has been pumped out for now, but a permanent solution is needed. The main drainage has been encroached upon by local people by building houses." "We have found an open space on one side of the temple complex and a new drainage line can be constructed in that direction. A letter has been sent to the district administration in this regard," Saxena added.

Meanwhile, sub-divisional magistrate Deepak Saini denied that sewage had flown into the temple and claimed to have been there during inspection by the ASI team. He, however, said some complaints regarding sewer line damage have been received. "If we find any damage, it will be repaired immediately," the SDM said. District disaster management officer Nand Kishore Joshi said that the temple is located on a flat land in a low-lying area and the human habitation that developed on the slopes of surrounding mountains may have led to water ending up inside the complex. "Some of the houses built right next to the temple are several decades old. However, the speed at which houses are being constructed in that area is definitely a matter of concern," he said. ASI officials also said that chemical coating work will be done on the temple to protect it once monsoon is over and the roof of the temple's porch, called Sukhnas, will be covered with a new canopy.



The temple is situated at Gopeshwar in Chamoli

4. Landslides at Mansa Devi hill threaten safety of 50,000 locals

The recurring landslides and land erosion from Mansa Devi hill during the monsoon season have become a grave concern for the safety of 50,000 residents residing in residential colonies such as Brahmपुरi, Khadkhnadi, Nayi Basi, Jogia Mandi and Bhimgoda.

Over the past month, the Dehradun Haridwar railway track has been closed on four occasions due to debris, and the continuous erosion and landslides pose a threat to two British era railway tunnels. In light of these risks, the district magistrate of Haridwar has urgently written to the disaster management secretary, requesting the formation of an expert committee to assess the situation in the area.

25 JULY 2023

TIMES OF INDIA

Landslides at Mansa Devi hill threaten safety of 50k locals

MS Nawaz | TNN

Narseh Dewan Shelly

Haridwar: The recurring landslides and land erosion from Mansa Devi mountain during the monsoon season have become a grave concern for the safety of 50,000 residents residing in residential colonies such as Brhampuri, Khadkhadi, Nayi Basi, Jogia Mandi, and Bhingoda. Over the past month, the Dehradun-Haridwar railway track has been closed on four occasions due to debris, and the continuous erosion and landslides also pose a threat to two British-era railway tunnels. In light of these risks, the district magistrate (DM) of Haridwar has urgently written to the disaster management secretary, requesting the formation of an expert committee to assess the situation in the area.

Prashant Kumar, a local, said, "Every time it rains, debris flows into our colonies, severely disrupting daily life. People in the adjacent mountainous areas live in fear. Despite multiple appeals to the authorities, no action has been taken so far."

The danger is not only confined to the locals but also poses a significant threat to pilgrims, as the affected areas are close to popular destinations like Har-Ki-Pauri, Mansa Devi temple, and local markets. Even the Vishnu Ghat area, a busy pedestrian route to Harki Pauri, has been impacted by debris. While risk assessments were conducted in 2008 and



The danger poses a significant threat to pilgrims, as the affected areas are close to popular destinations such as Har-Ki-Pauri, Mansa Devi temple and local markets

2010, experts have emphasised the need for a fresh assessment in light of the changing conditions. However, addressing the issue of mountain treatment is complicated, as the area falls under the jurisdiction of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve, and encroachment further exacerbates the problem.

DM Haridwar, Dhiraj Singh Garbyal, told TOI, "We are taking this matter very seriously" and a letter has been sent to higher officials to dispatch a team of geologists for a thorough inspection of the mountain and explore potential treatment measures. I hope the team will arrive soon in the next few days. Currently, we are consistently removing debris from the affected areas."

5. The sinking of Mastadi village, Uttarkashi District

Residents of Mastadi are getting very alarmed as the situation with land subsidence and cracks in their homes is worsening. Water is seeping inside and fresh cracks have appeared in houses, suspected to be caused by land subsidence following heavy rain.

As reported in June 2023 UDAS report land subsidence activity started in the region after the 1991 earthquake. Satyanarayan Semwal, Gram Pradhan of Mastadi had said, "It is distressing to witness fresh cracks and we are worried about what lies ahead."

He had added that "The government should take some action. At the very least, families residing in the approximately 30 severely affected houses should be relocated." A team of geologists had surveyed the village way back in 1997 and advised immediate measures to counter the issue of land subsidence. However, "no concrete action has been taken to address the problem to date", local residents said.

A geological department team from Dehradun along with the district administration officials conducted a survey of Mastadi village in July end 2023. The team collected samples of soil to determine the causes behind the cracks. The geological team will submit the report to the government after which further action will be taken.

Survey conducted as new cracks appear in 2 villages

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MUSSOORIE: The geological department team from Dehradun along with district administration officials conducted a survey of Mastadi and Kujan village in Uttarkashi district where the houses and agricultural fields have developed cracks. The team also collected samples of soil to determine the cause behind the cracks, people familiar with the matter said. The geologists reached the two villages and collected samples of soil and interacted with the residents from two villages on Friday and Saturday. Devendra Patwal, district disaster management officer Uttarkashi said, "The team on the directions of district magistrate Abhishek Ruhela conducted the survey of the two villages and collected several samples of soil of the area." The geological survey team will submit the report to the government after which further action will be taken accordingly, he added. The residents alleged that the cracks have started developing after a tunnel for Lohari Nagpala hydro project was constructed below the two villages. Ram Singh, a resident of Kujan village said, "Due to recent rains the cracks in more than 20 houses have widened and they now face a threat to their life and property." The residents of Mastadi village said that the water was seeping inside their houses and they have to live outside the house as a precautionary measure. Once the report is submitted to the government the work of safety and treatment of the two villages will be started, added Patwal. In 1997, geologists conducted a survey in the village and suggested that the villagers be moved out to a safer location besides recommending some other protective measures. In July, a fresh crack had appeared near a residential building in subsidence-hit Joshimath, sparking concerns among residents and the administration that the problem might worsen during the monsoon. At least 868 residential buildings and other structures developed cracks in the first week of January. On January 25, eight technical agencies, such as Central Building Research Institute and IIT Roorkee conducted studies on the sinking town and submitted their report to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). In January this year, HT had reported in Uttarkashi district, Sarnaul village in Barkot Tehsil in witnessing cracks in the houses of villagers. According to Sarita Devi, Gram Pradhan Sarnaul village said due to heavy rains cracks developed in many houses, forcing many families to shift elsewhere. In Hadyari village of Uttarkashi district located on the rim of Tehri Hydro project reservoir is also facing landslides with several houses developing cracks, especially the landslide that occurred in the area in 2021.



The geologists collected samples of soil and interacted with the residents from the two villages on Friday and Saturday. HT PHOTO

HINDUSTAN TIMES

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6. July 2023 Uttarakhand Disaster and Damage Diary

The month of July has brought torrential rains to Uttarakhand, causing wide spread damages, devastation and destruction.

As per state government data, 72 people have died and 179 injured in the monsoon period due to natural disasters and road accidents (15 June till 28 July, 2023). The maximum casualties have been reported from Uttarkashi and Haridwar. 443 animals have also died during this period.

According to the natural disaster report of the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), 29 people have lost their lives in the natural disasters - landslides being the biggest killer - in the last one and a half months. Of the 29 fatalities, 19 were reported from 8 July, 2023 onwards.

8,580 hectares of agricultural land has been affected due to the floods. Of this, the maximum i.e 8,507 hectares is in the district of Haridwar.

72 dead in natural disasters, road accidents since June 15

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Dehradun: As many as 72 people have been killed in natural disasters and road accidents since the start of rains this year (June 15) in Uttarakhand, state government data has revealed.

According to the natural disaster report of the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), 29 people have lost their lives in natural disasters — landslides being the biggest killer — in the last one-and-a-half months. Of the 29 fatalities, 19 were reported in the last 20 days. On June 14, TOI had reported that over a dozen people were killed and three went missing after they were hit by falling boulders in the



Uttarkashi and Haridwar districts have been the worst affected

hills, after merely four days of heavy rainfall in the state.

Besides, 32 people have suffered injuries in these incidents, with the majority of them being reported since July 10, when rain-triggered natural disasters increased in the state. Uttarkashi and Haridwar districts have been the

'Need to boost flood forecasting system'

Secretary in state disaster management department, Ranjit Sinha, on Thursday said there is a need to strengthen flood forecasting systems in low-lying areas to detect threatening events in advance, at a meeting at secretariat. TNN

worst affected, with five deaths each. Dehradun witnessed three deaths due to natural disasters, while Chamoli and Rudrapurayag witnessed two deaths each. As far as road accidents are concerned, 43 people were killed, and 147 injured since June 15 this year, according to SEOC data.

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About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with the institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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