On Floods in Southern West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Occurrence of flood during the periods of heavy shower is quite common in southern West Bengal. The present paper focuses on the flood problem of southern West Bengal, its causes and remedial measures that may be undertaken to alleviate the situation.

Introduction

The state of West Bengal lies in the eastern part of India. The southern portion of the state is flood-prone and floods occur with a depressing regularity. The causes and structural and non-structural measures for prevention and control of floods are discussed in this paper.

Causes Of Floods

A number of factors combine to cause floods in southern West Bengal. There is extremely high rainfall in the monsoon season. The seaward slope of southern West Bengal is very low and the Ganga delta is tidal in nature. There are several low-lying areas where water lies stagnant. There is siltation of several outlet canals reducing carrying capacity. Also, there is human encroachment on some channels hampering renovation of those channels.

Measures That May Be Taken

Quite a few measures may be taken to reduce floods in this region. The network of drainage canals are to be increased and silted drainage canals are to be dredged to augment channel capacity and allow free flow of excess water through those channels. More dykes are to be built to prevent flood water from entering low-lying areas and existing dykes are to be strengthened to prevent their breaching. If possible, human habitation is to be evacuated from flood-prone areas. Pumps of adequate capacity are to be kept on stand-by to pump out water particularly from low areas. Better meteorological forecasting is necessary so that the water levels in the Damodar

Valley Corporation reservoirs can be brought down early enough to accommodate high inflows from upstream in flood periods. Adequate discharge channels are to be provided in the lower Damodar basin; this area is suffering from flood due to inadequate discharge channels. The capacity of the Mayurakshi river also needs to be augmented.

Conclusion

Floods in southern West Bengal can be prevented or reduced by taking adequate structural and non-structural measures. The present paper has focussed on these aspects.

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