

'Pune doesn't have accurate flood map'

Environmentalists stress on need for one before Monsoon 2020

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PUNE: Pune has no accurate flood map, and with just six months left for the monsoon, it is high time that a map is prepared. This was the sentiment of environmentalists with whom Sakal Times got in touch.

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While parts of Pune suffered due to flooding of Mula-Mutha, Ramnadi, Ambli Odha and other water bodies last monsoon, city-based activists pointed out that the authorities have not yet studied the areas.

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SWEPT: A file photo of the collapsed compound wall of Ambli Odha.

'IDENTIFY CRITICAL AREAS'

■ The flash floods in September and October 2019 caused deaths in Pune, a blot that could have been avoided with proper initial planning. "We need to make an accurate flood map of the city, and identify the areas that are critically prone to floods. Only then, we can make policies to prevent flooding in future. Otherwise, such floods will keep recurring," said environmentalist Shailaja Deshpande.

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They expressed concern that the same flood-like situation might repeat this year if swift action is not taken.

"Pune has no accurate flood map," said activist Shailaja Deshpande of Jeevinaadi. "Before making any policy decisions on how flooding can be prevented, it is necessary that the authorities carry out a study of the water bodies that overflowed causing inundation of the surrounding areas this year. Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) authorities said they are going to remove encroachments. How-

ever, what demarcations they have used is unclear, as we do not have a flood map."

Frequent changes

Environmentalist Sarang Yadwadkar said that in 2011, the Irrigation Department demarcated the floodlines in the city, yet changes were made in them for vested interests of stakeholders.

"People shifted the floodlines more inside the river basin, and continued to encroach upon it. The PMC, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) and Pune Metropolitan Region

Development Authority (PMRDA) are all apathetic towards encroachments. They are also neglecting court orders. That is the main problem leading to floods," Yadwadkar added.

However, PMC Additional Commissioner Rubal Agarwal said the process of allotting tenders for the work has been done.

"We have decided upon measures to restore the walls and prevent flooding of Ambli Odha and other water bodies again. Tenders have been given out, and the work will soon begin," she added.

Restoration to original width

Deshpande said that to get rid of encroachments, it is necessary to find out the original width of Ambli Odha.

"There are some old studies and documents. Even we can help the authorities to mark the area that needs to be cleared. Also, first order streams of the water body needs to be restored. When water flows to any water body from hills, it comes down through streams, that allows the water to flow gently, instead of gushing directly into the river

or nala. However, as these streams have vanished due to encroachment, deforestation and garbage, water pours down directly, and area around the water body is flooded," she added.

The same, Deshpande reiterated, was the case with the flooding of river Mula-Mutha earlier in August.

"The dams are built with knowledge of the capacity that the river can bear when water is released. However, with heavy rainfall, the water gushed down into the river causing it to swell and enter surrounding areas," she said.