

# 6,808 dead in rain, cyclones in 3 years

West Bengal tops the list with 964 fatalities caused by flash floods, landslips

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Nearly 6,800 people lost their lives in the country over the past three years due to hydro-meteorological calamities such as flash floods, landslips and cyclones, and West Bengal has recorded the highest deaths among all States,

The details were provided by the Home Ministry in response to a question by Congress MP from Tamil Nadu, Su. Thirunavukkarasar, earlier this month in the Lok Sabha.

As per the reply, the country recorded 6,808 deaths (2,400 in 2018-19, 2,422 in 2019-20 and 1,986 in 2020-21). West Bengal recorded 964 deaths (383 in 2018-19, 227 in 2019-20 and 354 in 2020-21), which amounts to 14% of deaths due to hydro meteorological calamities.

According to the Ministry, hydro-meteorological calamities and hazards include flash floods, cloudburst and landslips. During the monsoon period (April-October mainly; in Western Ghat terrains from April to December, including the phase of the northeast monsoon), incidents occur in almost all landslide-prone areas, some of which are disastrous, leading to loss of lives, the reply pointed out.

"In most cases, these are triggered by extreme rainfall events or cloudbursts. These



**Wind shear:** The trail of destruction left behind by Cyclone Amphan in West Bengal. ■ AP

types of fatal landslip events are common almost every year, mainly in the Himalayan States, in the Western Ghats, and Konkan areas," the statement tabled in the Lok Sabha said.

## M.P., Kerala affected

Other than West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh recorded 833 deaths, followed by Kerala 708 in the same period. In both the States, the spike in the casualties has been caused by floods. For instance, Kerala recorded 455 deaths in 2018-19 due to 2018 floods. Madhya Pradesh recorded 674 deaths in 2019-20 caused by floods.

"What the figures tell us about West Bengal is that for

the three consecutive years the deaths due to natural calamities are high. The reason could be the geography of the State where there are both mountains and coastline. The State is susceptible to both landslides, cyclones and floods," said Tuhin Ghosh, Director of the School of Oceanography, Jadavpur University. Prof. Ghosh, an expert on disaster management, said that under the Disaster Management Act, States were empowered to take action to prevent deaths due to natural calamities.

Among the other States which recorded high casualties due to hydro meteorological calamities are Maha-

rastra – 571 deaths – in the same period. Assam, a State that faces regular floods, has recorded 303 deaths, Tamil Nadu 201 casualties and the coastal State of Odisha, 145 deaths in the same period.

## Funds allocation

In terms of funds released by the Centre under State Disaster Response Funds, highest funds were allocated to Maharashtra, ₹1,288.80 crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh ₹773.20 crore and Madhya Pradesh ₹728 crore. For West Bengal, the funds released by the Centre under State Disaster Response Funds was ₹404.40 crore.

Experts also point that over the past three years, West Bengal had braved four tropical cyclones – Fani (May 2019), Bulbul (November 2019), Amphan (May 2020) and Yaas (May 2021).

In response to another question in the Lok Sabha, the Home Ministry's reply suggests that the damage caused by cyclone Yaas, which made a landfall in north Odisha in May 2021, was more to West Bengal than in Odisha. While in Odisha about 18,094 huts and houses were damaged or destroyed, the number in West Bengal was about three lakh.

In West Bengal, crops were affected over 1,70,891 hectares and in Odisha, 5,672.99 hectares were hit.