Sikkim flood death count mounts to 14

100 people, including 22 Armymen, yet to be located; 11 bridges washed away; key national highway in very bad state; 26 relief camps set up

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The confirmed death toll from the flash floods in Sikkim rose to 14 on Thursday with 102 people, including 22 Army personnel, still missing after the glacier-fed Lhonak lake in north Sikkim triggered a flash flood in the Teesta river basin on Wednesday.

The floods have severely damaged the Chungthang dam that is the mainstay of a key hydropower project, the Teesta-3, situated along the Teesta river that courses through Sikkim, West Bengal and Bangladesh.

The State government has set up 26 relief camps in the four affected districts, the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority said on Thursday, with at least 1,025 people taking shelter in the eight relief camps in Gangtok district.

The flood destroyed 11 bridges in the State, with eight bridges getting washed away in Mangan district alone. Two bridges were destroyed in Namchi and one in Gangtok.

The National Highway-10, considered the lifeline of the State, sustained extensive damage at several places.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Herculean task: Army personnel trying to recover trucks buried in slush after the flash floods in north Sikkim. ANI

Sikkim flood death count rises to 14

Water pipelines, sewage lines and 277 houses, both kuchcha and concrete, have been destroyed in the four affected districts. Chungthang town bore the maximum brunt of the flood with 80% of it getting severely affected.

On Thursday, Pankaj Agrawal, Secretary, Ministry of Power, convened an emergency meeting to ascertain damage to projects operated by the National Hydropower Corporation (NHPC). All bridges downstream the Teesta-V hydropower station were submerged or washed out, disrupting communication.

"The floodwater overtopped the dam of the Teesta V power station [510 MW]. All connecting roads to the project sites as well as parts of the residential colony have been severely damaged," the Power Ministry said in a statement. "Presently the power station is shut and not generating any electricity."

The Teesta 3 power project is not operated by the NHPC.

One NHPC employee at the Teesta V power station lost his life. All of the organisation's other personnel at the site were safe.

Works on the under-construction Teesta VI (500 MW) of the NHPC were disrupted with water entering into the powerhouse and transformer cavern. Dams and hydropower projects in downstream West Bengal were not significantly affected but were kept shut from heavy siltation that resulted from the floodwaters.

"The NHPC is making all possible efforts to maintain supply of essential commodities such as food, medicine and electricity," said the Power Ministry.

Exact trigger not clear

The South Lhonak lake in northern Sikkim is situated about 5,200 metres above sea level. Scientists have previously warned that the lake had been expanding over years, possibly from the melting of the ice at its head. Nearly half the lake was drained out, according to a press statement by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). This was likely caused by an "avalanche from the ice-capped feature."

There is still uncertainty on the exact trigger for the glacial lake outburst, as the phenomenon is called with suggestions that excessive rain or an earthquake might have been a trigger. With heavy rain in the region, the India Meteorological Department has forecast rain till late Friday.

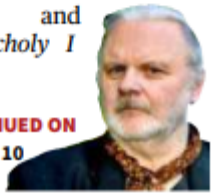
Norway's Jon Fosse wins Nobel for literature

Agence France-Presse
STOCKHOLM

Norway's Jon Fosse, whose plays are among the most widely staged of any contemporary playwright in the world, won the Nobel Prize in literature on Thursday.

The Swedish Academy said the 64-year-old was honoured "for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable".

Written in Norwegian Nynorsk language, Mr. Fosse's oeuvre spans a variety of genres – plays, novels, poetry collections, essays, children's books and translations, the jury noted. His major works include *Boathouse* and *Melancholy I* and *II*.



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» PAGE 10

Norway's Jon Fosse wins Nobel for literature

"I am overwhelmed and grateful. I see this as an award to the literature that first and foremost aims to be literature, without other considerations," Mr. Fosse said in a statement.

The chairman of the Nobel committee, Anders Olsson, told reporters that Mr. Fosse had come to be regarded as an innovator through his "ability to evoke... loss of orientation, and how this paradoxically can provide access to a deeper experience, close to divinity".

After studying literature, he made his debut in 1983 with the novel *Red, Black*, which moves back and forth in time and between perspectives.

His latest book, *Septology*, a semi-autobiographical magnum opus – seven parts spread across three volumes – runs to 1,250 pages without a single full stop. The third volume was shortlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize.

After a pandemic surge, maternal deaths fell sharply in T.N. last year

MMR in Tamil Nadu surged to 90 per one lakh live births during 2021-2022 when the pandemic was raging and dropped to 52 per one lakh live births during 2022-2023; Health Minister Ma. Subramanian attributes this to improvements in infrastructure and healthcare services

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) had surged to 90 per one lakh live births during 2021-2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and dropped to 52 per one lakh live births during 2022-2023.

Health Minister Ma. Subramanian gave out this data at an event to mark the collaboration between the State's Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (DPH) with Singapore Health Services and Singapore International Foundation (SIF), for imparting training on combined obstetric resuscitation emergencies and enhancing maternal and child health services in Tamil Nadu on Thursday.

The Minister said every year, nearly 10 lakh pregnancies were recorded in the State. Improvements in infrastructure and healthcare services enabled the drop in MMR.

The Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine is collaborating with Singapore Health Services and Singapore International Foundation for imparting training on 'combined obstetric resuscitation emergencies and enhancing maternal and child health services'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Health officials explained that T.N.'s MMR had surged in 2021-2022 due to COVID-19. There were more or less the same number of live births during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 – about 9.20 lakh.

In 2021-2022, of 827 maternal deaths, 250 were due to COVID-19. The rise was primarily because of second wave of COVID-19. The number of maternal deaths recorded during 2022-2023 was 479, as COVID-19 cases came under control, officials explained.

The Minister said that the collaboration was aimed at further reducing maternal and newborn deaths in the State. Singapore had a MMR of 10 per one lakh live births. Their training methodologies and treatment modalities would be beneficial. Under this collaboration, Tamil Nadu doctors and nurses were being trained in emergency obstetrics and newborn resuscitation.

Edgar Pang, Consul-General of the Republic of Singapore in Chennai; Vijaya Rao, director, Singapore Health Services; and Shephali Tagore, senior consultant, KK Women's and Children Hospital, Singapore, were present. T.S. Selvavinayagam, Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, was also present.

Mr. Subramanian said that dengue cases were under control in the State. Till date, the State has reported 4,703 cases. A total of 420 people were currently undergoing treatment in hospitals.

Medical colleges

In 2011, former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi announced that there should be one medical college in every district. As of now, there are 36 government medical colleges. Six districts, including newly created ones, do not have medical colleges.

The National Medical Commission's (NMC) recent notification has brought in certain restrictions on the opening of new medical colleges. The State has already put forward the need to establish new medical colleges in Mayiladuthurai, Tenkasi, Perambalur, Ranipet, Tirupattur, and Kancheepuram.

"The Health Secretary is in New Delhi for a budget discussion. He will meet the Union Health Minister or the secretary about our previous demand as well as the NMC's stand," he told reporters.

Officials of the DPH, P. Vadivelan, A. Somasundaram, C. Sekar, J. Nirmalson, and V.K. Palani, principal of the Health and Family Welfare Training Centre, were present.

Hitachi's innovation centre opens in Chennai

M. K. Stalin greets Claudio Facchin, CEO of Hitachi Energy. T.R.B.Rajaa, Minister for Industries, is also seen. M. VEDHAN

Hitachi Energy launched its energy generation unit in Tamil Nadu in February this year, and Thursday's event was its continuation, he said.

Tamil Nadu is the second largest economy in India, and leads on several parameters of industrial growth. "We aspire not only to sustain this trend but also to grow further; for this, we are making efforts to attract investments on a large scale," Mr. Stalin said.

To attract investments, T.N. is creating sector-specific parks with world-class infrastructure, he said. Mr. Stalin said the State unveiled sector-specific policies and schemes, including the Research and Development Policy, besides policies for industrial parks, innovation hubs and skill development centres.

"Since we unveiled the Tamil Nadu Research and Development Policy, 2022, in July last year, there has been a drastic increase in the number of research and development, innovation, and global capability centres opening up in the State, resulting in the creation of tremendous opportunities for industrialists, academics and start-ups," he said.

"We will be hosting the Global Investors Meet in January, with companies like Hitachi, and I hope that you will be able to bring similar Japanese companies to the summit," he said.

Strategic investment

"This centre in Chennai is a strategic investment that accelerates innovation, digitalisation, and engineering capabilities to support our customers in advancing the world's energy systems to be more sustainable, flexible and secure," said Claudio Facchin, CEO, Hitachi Energy.

Equality and identity

Equitable distribution of resources must not be by accentuating caste identity

The significance of Bihar conducting a caste survey and publishing a caste-wise count of its population is quite immense. The survey, which had all the trappings of a census, complete with a two-stage process of house-listing followed by the eliciting of information from the households, has shown that 63% of Bihar's 13 crore population belong to castes listed under the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories. The socio-economic profiles of the people have also been recorded, but are yet to be revealed. At the national level, it may give a boost to the political demand for a country-wide caste census and push the judicial discourse towards reconsidering the 50% legal ceiling on total reservation in education and government services. In terms of party politics, it may open a new chapter in the traditional conflict between the BJP seeking to consolidate all sections of Hindus into one massive support base and other parties banking on different sections of the OBCs. At a time when Hindutva is seen to have trumped parties that banked on OBC assertion, influential social groups may now sense an opportunity to leverage their size to get their interests advanced by the political class. On the legal side, the numbers may be utilised to present the sort of 'quantifiable data' that the judiciary has been asking for to justify the levels of reservation obtaining in various States.

Bihar's exercise marks a precedent on how a caste count should be conducted. The methodology included giving a code to each of the 214 castes in the State's lists of castes. Sub-castes and sects were identified in advance and subsumed under a broader caste name. This meant that the enumerators could assign a code to any caste name given by a respondent. A major reason for the Union government not releasing the caste-related details of its 2011 'Socio-economic and Caste Census' was that the data it yielded was too confusing and unwieldy. As many as 46 lakh castes were named by the people, presumably because they gave castes, sub-castes, sects, clans, and surnames when asked to name their castes. While there are functional and practical advantages to knowing exact caste numbers, it is not to be forgotten that the larger goal of the Constitution remains the attainment of a casteless society. Affirmative action indeed helps address inequities in society. The state must also look for ways to ensure equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of resources without accentuating caste identity.

Inspiring colours

Chemistry Nobel Prize goes to trio that made 'artificial atoms'

Travelling in a bus can be an enjoyable experience if you have your own seat, the vehicle is not crowded, and there is a nice breeze. But if the bus is packed with people, you can get irritable. Something similar happens to atoms: if they are contained in a vessel at a low density, they behave in a certain way, but if they are packed densely together, with little moving space, something new happens. The 2023 Nobel Prize in Chemistry has been awarded to three people who found out what happens. Technically, they have been selected for discovering and refining quantum dots – small crystals a few nanometres wide. Each quantum dot has only a few thousand atoms (whereas a single droplet of water can have a sextillion). And because the atoms are packed so closely together in the dot, their electrons are very close to each other. In this setting, the laws of quantum mechanics describe the behaviour of quantum dots – so much so that an entire dot can mimic the behaviour of an atom. The dots have another famous property. If you shine some light on a quantum dot, it will absorb and re-emit that light at a different frequency (or colour) depending on its size. Smaller dots emit light of higher frequency (bluer) and vice versa. So, a quantum dot made of some material would respond in one way whereas a quantum dot made of the same material but smaller would respond differently. For these reasons, quantum dots have found many applications in transistors, lasers, medical imaging, and quantum computing. In 1981, Alexei Ekimov, then working in the Soviet Union, first synthesised quantum dots 'frozen' inside glass. Two years later, Louis Brus synthesised quantum dots in a solution in the U.S., and worked out their quantum-physical properties. Finally, Moungi Bawendi, whose work on quantum dots began as a student under Dr. Brus, found a way to make quantum dots of high quality in an easy and reliable way in 1993. For their contributions, they have shared the Nobel Prize.

Some of the most fascinating scientific discoveries, for all their technical sophistication, are actually innocuous in their appeal. Quantum dots are one such. Understanding why they behave the way they do requires specialised knowledge of quantum mechanics, but quantum mechanics do not dictate their behaviour. Dr. Ekimov himself was inspired by the colours in stained glass. While quantum dots light up LED screens and the location of a tumour that needs to be removed, it is important not to lose sight of the colours – the reds, the greens, and the blues – and whatever more they might inspire.

Dipika, Harinderpal add more golden lustre to India's campaign

The squash duo digs deep into its reserves to claim the mixed doubles gold in a tight contest against Malaysia's Aifa and Syafiq; Ghosal clinches a silver, his fifth consecutive singles medal in the continental showpiece since his debut in 2006

Mixed fortunes: Dipika and Harinderpal quelled the Malaysian challenge in straight games to take the top prize. *Right:* Ghosal could not sustain the momentum after winning the first game in the summit clash. PTI

ASIAN GAMES

Uthra Ganesan
HANGZHOU

Four bronze, one silver and four editions since her Asian Games debut in 2010 later, Dipika Pallikal finally finally had a gold to her name, teaming up with old friend Harinderpal Sandhu to claim the mixed doubles and India's second squash gold here, winning 11-10, 11-10 against Malaysia's Aifa Binti Azman and Mohd. Syafiq Kamal in 35 minutes.

The duo had to dig deep into its reserves and experience to survive crucial moments in both games as Harinderpal got his second gold here after the men's team final.

The first game was a roller-coaster with the lead switching hands every couple of points before the Indians saved two game balls to win, the second saw them dominate and race to a 9-3 lead before the Malaysians fought back, reeling seven straight points to go ahead 10-9. But the Indian pair hung tight, saved the game seven times as the point kept getting replayed before getting the final two to seal the win.

"To be honest, it's a complete blur. The only thing I remember, and Harry also I am sure, is the last point and how we won it. We will go back to the drawing board and see what went wrong at that time but for now, we will just enjoy ourselves," Dipika said about the second game.

Answering critics

The medal was also her response to many critics who questioned her fitness and suitability for a tough outing. "We sacrifice a lot of things but that doesn't mean we have to give up on our dreams. It is very important for women to feel empowered and to know that it's ok to take time off, have kids and come back to the sport.

"The guilt will always be there of leaving them but I know I am doing something worthwhile and that when they grown up, they will know their mother wasn't holidaying in Hangzhou but working to win a medal for the country and them," she insisted.

Harinderpal on his part quipped that it felt like being on court with a teacher when things weren't going smoothly.

"We started OK, then we lost the lead and I wasn't doing so well on court. I was like the kid in school who loses track and then the teacher comes – she's always there in the ear and put me back on track."

In men's singles, there was no fairytale finish for Saurav Ghosal. It was the one prize missing from his cabinet and despite his best efforts, Ghosal had to settle for his second silver and fifth consecutive singles medal, going down 11-9, 9-11, 5-11, 7-11 to Malaysia's Eain Yow Ng.

Proud

The most decorated Indian athlete in the sport with a medal in every edition he has participated in since his Asian Games debut in 2006 was proud of his performance.

"That's the one medal I really wanted and I put in everything. I don't know if I am going to have another shot but if this is the last one, I can be proud of the fact I gave it everything and I don't think I could have given more," he declared.

Super Six: Jyothi Surekha, Parneet, Aditi, Ojas, Prathamesh and Abhishek Verma strike a pose with their reward after the twin success on Thursday. PTI

Indian compound archery teams' domination complete

Aashin Prasad
HANGZHOU

With the scores tied at 200 each, Indian archers needed to hit three perfect 10s in a row to stay alive in the compound women's team final at the Fuyang Arena.

First, Parneet Kaur hit a 10 before Aditi Swami and Jyothi Surekha followed suit with 10s to put the pressure back on Chinese Taipei. Taipei slipped up with the first arrow which assured India's gold medal and it won 230-229.

Later, the trio of Abhishek Verma, Ojas Pravin Deotale and Prathamaesh Jawkar won the men's team gold by beating South Korea 235-230 in the final.

Treble beckons

The victory took India archery gold tally to three and with Abhishek, Ojas and Jyothi in the finals of the men's and women's individual events, the tally could go to five. Jyothi, who also won the mixed team final on Wednesday, is on course for treble.

"My golden girls," said a proud Sanjeeva Singh, India's high-performance director of archery.

It was not too long ago when India and the rest of the world feared South Korea and its ruthless archers.

"South Korea fear us in compound archery now," said Abhishek, who was part of the team which won India its first gold in archery at the Asian Games in 2010.

"When I started in 2004, there were just four compound archers in the country. Now there are over 10,000!" added Abhishek.

India is in the midst of a phenomenal run this year after its success in the World Cups and World Championships. In the World championships in Berlin, India won its maiden three gold medals at the level to finish top of the medals tally for the first time.

However, compound archery is still not part of the Olympic programme with an application being sent by World Archery for the archery form to be included in the Los Angeles 2028 programme.

"I hope it comes in 2028 in indoor form and we will be the first to win gold," proclaimed a confident Sanjeeva. "For any Olympic medal, you need to work eight years behind and I have been working for 20 years. And by the time, compound archery is introduced to the Olympics, we will be ready."