

RECKLESS SPREE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON JOSHIMATH SINKING

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

January 12, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 08:13 am IST

COMMENTS

SHARE

READ LATER

The [land subsidence in Joshimath](#) has become emblematic of a geological disaster that has in fact manifested across India, in the neighbourhood of several large resource-extraction projects. There have been reports of subsidence from the [Jharia](#), Bhurkunda, Kapasara, Raniganj and Talcher coal mines; from Delhi and Kolkata due to the over-extraction of groundwater; and from Mehsana for hydrocarbons. Last year, land in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, began to sag shortly after a hydroelectric power project began test runs, calling into question the [effects of the Tapovan Vishnugad facility](#) near Joshimath in Uttarakhand. In 2010, some months after [a tunnel-boring machine nicked an underground aquifer near Joshimath](#), leading to substantial water discharge, two researchers wrote in *Current Science* that the “sudden and large scale dewatering of the strata has the potential” to trigger “ground subsidence in the region”. Determining whether the ongoing incident can be traced directly to the 2009 aquifer puncture is complicated by the lack of long-term scientific investigations of the area. On January 5, the NTPC issued a statement washing its hands of the unfolding crisis after locals began pointing fingers at Tapovan Vishnugad, as well as the Helang-Marwari bypass as part of the Char Dham project. Scientists from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Geophysical Research Institute [set out on January 10 to examine the circumstances of the subsidence](#). Both the national and the State governments must heed the team’s findings, even if it means ceasing further construction work.

Experts and civil society have called on the government on many occasions to ease its dam-building spree, of late over rivers in the north and the Northeast; to moderate tourism in the regions to be sustainable; and to not blow off unstable hillsides to widen roads. Heavy rains in Aizawl in July triggered subsidence, exposing poor zoning enforcement and oversight of the regional carrying capacity. But in Joshimath, which is particularly prone to landslides, questions about zoning, carrying capacity and tipping points have all been set aside. The subsidence in Joshimath has captured the nation’s attention because it is a destination for both pilgrims and tourists, but it is far from being the site of the first or the deadliest incident. The government must undertake whatever repair and restoration efforts it is undertaking at Joshimath at all the other sites as well. Finally, the national and the State governments must listen to both science and the people already living near mines and dams. There is an argument to allow economically developing countries to emit more before becoming carbon-neutral, but it is not a free pass to plunder natural resources at the cost of climate justice.

COMMENTS

SHARE

[Uttarakhand](#) / [disaster \(general\)](#) / [disaster and accident](#) / [Environmental disasters](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com