

‘Rs 50,000 lakh spent on flood and drought relief since 1991’

Govt plans to strengthen monitoring cell: Kharge

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Following the worst-ever drought in the last three decades which has gripped the State, the government is contemplating to broadbase the activities of the Drought Monitoring Cell and also strengthen it as “natural disaster mitigation centre” to help fight natural disasters.

Disclosing this at a national seminar on “Organisation and infrastructure management of disasters” organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies and Alumni Association of Jadavapur University’s Bangalore chapter here, Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge recalled that Karnataka had taken lead over other states in the country by establishing the drought monitoring cell in 1998. The organisation is carrying out multi-disciplinary studies related to drought and is providing scientific inputs to manage and mitigate the drought, he said.

Observing that drought and floods are the most common disasters faced by the country, the home minister said Karnataka has incurred an expenditure of about Rs 50,000 lakh in one decade from 1991 to 2001 towards providing relief in connection with drought and flood incidents.

Expressing concern that the State is facing the worst drought in the last three decades, he said that 142 taluks, out of the total 175, had recorded deficit rainfall. The first assessment of the loss due to the drought had been put at Rs 3,200 crore.

Drought has not only caused misery to the farmers but also affected the socio-economic scenario

of the State, he said.

The toll and damages in natural disasters has been increasing in the world, he said, pointing out that an average of 1.40 lakh people were being killed in major disasters every year of which 90 per cent of the deaths were occurring in third world countries.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the lack of preparedness and infrastructure to face disasters in the third world countries, he said: “An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.3 has caused loss of only six lives in California and more than 10,000 lives in Latur.” Hence there is a need to take keen interest in tackling the problems of disaster management in the third world countries in tune with the new spirit of global internationalism.

Making a presentation on “Status of drought in Karnataka,” Agriculture Commissioner Dr Subramanya noted that sowing had been done only on half the agricultural land in the State of which standing crop on one-third of the land had already withered.

Pointing out that nine lakh farmers had subscribed to the crop insurance scheme, he said those farmers were relieved of some problems.

Karnataka is the only State to implement the crop-insurance scheme basing hobli-as a unit, he said. Karnataka had largest area of drought-prone land only next to Rajasthan, he said.

NIAS Director Prof R Narasimha stressed the need for improving the disaster management system and also being more organised in tackling disasters.

Pointing out that money and manpower were available in plenty to tackle the disasters, he regretted that proper management of disasters was lacking.

Dr S Parasuraman, policy advocacy director, Action-Aid, Bangkok, stressed the need for involving people and all the stakeholders in the disaster management plan.

Noted scientist and Rajya Sabha member Dr Raja Ramanna also spoke on the occasion.

19 seismic monitoring stations in State likely

BANGALORE, Aug 25 (DHNS)

Plans are on the anvil to establish 19 seismic monitoring stations in the State to keep a watch on the seismic activity, Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge said today.

Meanwhile, the Ports and Fisheries Department has also drawn programmes to check coastal erosion along the coastal tract of the State, he said, adding that better monitoring of the causative factors through proper scientific studies and associated socio-economic factors are the only solutions to mitigate the misery caused by the disasters.