

Water scarcity feared as rivers in Kodagu dry up in September after August deluge

Kodagu Connect News Network

MADIKERI: Kodagu, which witnessed heavy rains and floods in the third week of August this year, is now showing signs of water scarcity with the water level in River Kaveri dipping drastically across its path at Napoklu, Murnad and Siddapur.

After the all-consuming deluge which inundated many areas, rivers, streams and wells in Kodagu are seemingly drying up fast, exposing dry sand beds at many places. At Bethri near Murnad, the River Kaveri is now flowing with just a couple of feet high water.



River Kaveri at Bethri near Murnad on September 14, 2018. (Photo: Hareesh Kiggal)

Though in August, as the floods raged, River Kaveri overshot its banks at most places in Kodagu, sinking several parts of the district, it has been noticed that water levels at wells and streams at many places have drastically dipped in the last few weeks.

Commenting on the situation, Hareesh Kiggal, a resident of Kiggal village near Murnad says, “If the situation continues, the summer of 2019 will be a nightmare with drinking water shortage across Kodagu. At Bethri, the level of River Kaveri in September resembles the one we normally witness during March or April. Unlike previous years, rains poured continuously for three months from June to August without a break. Now in September there is hardly any rain. This is quite unusual when compared to previous years where monsoon invariably season extended till October. Sand mining and water pollution are major causes for low water levels soon after

the deluge.”



River Kaveri at Bethri near Murnad on September 14, 2018. (Photo: Hareesh Kiggal)

In an email response to *Kodagu Connect News Network*, Dr. T.V. Ramachandra, Energy & Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science says, “Water scarcity happens whenever there is high intensity rainfall and a lot of water flows as overland flow without much infiltration as only a fraction goes into the underlying strata. Due to high level of deforestation, the catchment of respective water bodies has lost the water retention capability. This has resulted in water level dipping in wells as well as in streams.”

“The decision makers in Kodagu should wake up and bring stringent norms to stop large scale land cover changes in the catchment areas of River Kaveri. Allowing land cover changes and inappropriate crops with poor water efficiency would only lead to water shortages despite good rainfall,” he added.

Similar situation has been noticed in the neighbouring Kerala as well. Experts say the water level in rivers has dipped as the landslide caused by torrential rains eroded the surface soil of land along their course and depositing it into the water bodies. This soil and silt mixed with sand in the river bed and on the banks, resulting in a concrete-like hard substance. This has caused a change in the physical, chemical and biological behaviour of the soil. It affects the productivity, nutrition and potency to absorb water. The floods have also deprived the soil of organisms, thus diminishing its capability to store water. That is an additional factor that has reduced surface water level both in rivers and nearby wells.

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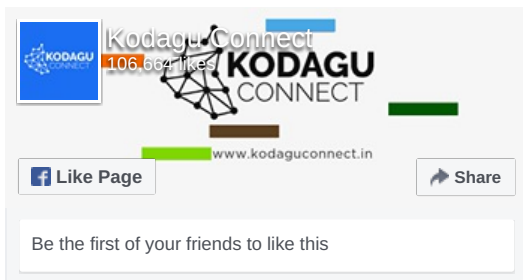
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