



Rethinking disaster management

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Highlights

- It is time to stop thinking of the extreme weather events hitting us with increasing frequency as bolts from the blue.
- Kerala bravely endured the monsoon storms, but it would be a mistake to think that disasters of this magnitude are “once in a hundred year” events.
- Weather disasters are being affected by climate change that is caused by humans.
- The devastation is worsened by the collective failure of governments and businesses to invest in building resilience despite the evidence on runaway climate change.
- The lesson from the Kerala floods, Hurricane Harvey (Houston, U.S., 2017) and Typhoon Haiyan (the Philippines, 2013) is that responses to disasters must be proactive, not just reactive.

Disaster management

- First, reconstruction efforts must involve rebuilding in a better way.
 - Climate proofing in Kerala calls for structures to be built with wind- and water-resistant materials.
- Second, people need to relocate out of harm’s way.
- Third, early warning is vital.
- Fourth, there needs to be tougher implementation of logging and mining regulations in fragile ecologies.
- The economic damage from global warming has global ramifications.
 - The 2011 floods in Thailand’s economic heartland disrupted not just national, but global manufacturing value chains.
 - The Kerala floods are estimated to have shaved off about 2.2% of the State’s GDP.
 - Bolstering resilience must be central to recovery.
- Multilateral agencies including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank may be well-positioned to provide financing, which is vital when budgets are stretched, and, crucially, knowledge solutions to tackle climate disasters.
- Kerala gets high marks for its participatory approach to relief and rehabilitation.
- Invaluable as this is, the new climate reality is raising the bar on disaster resilience.