

READY FOR THE WORST: ON GOVERNMENT'S BETTER PREPAREDNESS FOR CYCLONES

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That [Cyclone Mandous, which had its landfall near Mamallapuram](#), near Chennai, in the early hours of Saturday, did not cause much damage has come as a huge relief to the people of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. At one stage, it was expected to develop into a “severe cyclonic storm”, but did not gain much strength. Called a “textbook cyclone”, the storm, as predicted by the India Meteorological Department, crossed the coast with all the attendant features, to the satisfaction of professional meteorologists. Though Cyclone Mandous was similar to Cyclone Vardah which made landfall in Chennai in mid-December 2016, this event dumped heavy rainfall that was far more than what occurred under Vardah. This time, not only parts of north Tamil Nadu but also areas in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh experienced heavy rainfall. For instance, Vembakkam in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu and Srikalahasti in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh bore the brunt, recording rainfall of 25 cm and 23 cm, respectively, during the 24-hour-period that ended at 8.30 a.m. on Saturday. But more noteworthy was the way the official machinery in Tamil Nadu steered the disaster management system. Despite the cyclone crossing the coast at almost midnight and causing a number of trees and structures to fall, the response of the administration was swift and the common man's life hardly disrupted. Five lives were lost, a count much lower than during disasters of a similar magnitude.

After drawing flak in November 2021, and, subsequently, when Chennai and its vicinity experienced inundation following spells of heavy rain, the Tamil Nadu government has been paying greater attention this time to improving the storm-water drain network and such other works. Though one of the reasons cited for many areas being spared of flooding was that the core parts of the city did not receive as much rain as the interior parts of north Tamil Nadu, the State government's coordination with the Meteorological Department and its preparedness in tackling the post-landfall situation made a difference to the situation this time. Otherwise, as in the past, citizens would have suffered even in light rain. Technology too, both in terms of forecast and information dissemination, has been playing a key role. The authorities, i.e., the State government and the Meteorological department, should continuously work to improve their ways of functioning, making use of technology, and helping people to be ready to face a natural disaster of this nature or even of greater strength. Ideally, the official machinery should set a goal of ensuring no loss to life. Such a task would not be impossible, given the availability of resources, both hardware and software, and empirical data on cyclones and severe cyclones

crossing the coast of Tamil Nadu.

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