Flood warning: govt. teams up with Google

With the monsoon under way, Union Water Resources Ministry has teamed up with Google to generate flood warnings. If there are signs of an imminent flood, a Google Maps user will be able to see what regions are likely to see water logging first and if their neighbourhood is under threat.

Currently, the Central Water Commission (CWC) warns of floods based on the rising water levels in reservoirs and if these are nearing a dam's 'danger marks.' Last year, it began a trial programme to give 3-day flood forecasts. The India Meteorological Department now provides inputs to the CWC on whether heavy rainfall is likely and if this could translate into large amounts of rain water overflowing from river banks or catchments. "What Google will do is provide a visualisation. Via Google Maps, you will now be able to see water levels build up in a region," said an IMD meteorologist, intimately aware of the project.

"…CWC and Google will share technical expertise in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine learning, geospatial mapping and analysis of hydrological observation data to improve flood prediction systems, provide location-targeted, actionable flood warnings…and [use] Google Earth Engine to help visualise and improve flood management and [initiate] a cultural project to build online exhibitions on the 'Rivers of India…' said a press statement from the Ministry.

An experimental version of the exercise will likely begin this monsoon and — said the IMD meteorologist — will be offered "free of cost" as part of the company's "Corporate Social Responsibility." A company spokesperson didn't immediately respond to *The Hindu*'s request for comment.

"The collaborative arrangement is likely to result in savings of crores of rupees…," the press statement added.

Every year, monsoon brings torrential floods to several parts of India — particularly the North-East and many parts of Central India.

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