

March 2024
Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI)
Monthly Reports

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation
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About UDAAI Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAAI reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAAI is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAAI neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We therefore see UDAAI as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need of a holistic disaster management and accident minimization policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAAI will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the process of planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.

March 9, 2024 : Himalayan region's 'unpredictable geology' could delay Rishikesh rail project by two years

The Rishikesh-Karanprayag rail link project, which aims to improve connectivity to the Char Dham shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath, and Kedarnath in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand is likely to take at least two more years to complete.

Attributing the delay to the Himalayan region's "unpredictable geology", officials of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd, which is the project's executing agency, said that the digging of tunnels would be done by December, 2025. The initial cost of the 125-km-long broad gauge rail line project was Rs 16,216 crore, which is also slated to go up, the officials said.

Himalayan region's 'unpredictable geology' could delay Rishikesh rail project by 2 yrs

Sheo S Jaiswal | TNN

Haridwar: The Rishikesh-Karanprayag rail link project, which aims to improve connectivity to the Char Dham shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, is likely to take at least two more years to be completed.

Attributing the delay to Himalayan region's "unpredictable geology", officials of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL), the executing agency of the project, said that digging of tunnels would be done by Dec 2025. The initial cost of the 125-km-long broad gauge rail line project was Rs 16,216 crore which is also slated to go up, the officials said.

O P Malgudi, deputy general manager of RVNL, said, "The project work is going



Rishikesh-Karanprayag rail link project aims to improve connectivity to the Char Dham shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath in the Garhwal region

on at a good pace. Around 70% of tunneling work has already been done. Of the 125-km-long rail line, 104-km route is to

pass through tunnels. Once the digging of tunnels is complete, the track-laying process will most likely begin in June. Of the 16 bridges on the rail line, construction of four has been completed."

RVNL is executing the project with the help of nine project monitoring consultants (PMCs) from foreign countries including the US, Italy, Sweden and Turkey. Each PMC has been awarded one or more of the 10 civil construction packages which are being executed by big Indian companies including Max Infra, L&T, Hindustan Construction Company, Mega Engineering Infrastructure Ltd., Navyug and Rithwik, an official said. "The work allotted to these companies is almost similar and they are doing it simultaneously in different stretches," he added.

TIMES OF INDIA

MARCH 9, 2024

March 9, 2024 : Residents launch a campaign against felling of deodar trees

The residents of Almora district tied the raksha sutra (holy thread) around deodar trees as a sign of protest to save them from being cut down for widening of the road for Jageshwar Dham under "Manaskhand Mandir Mala Mission".

This happened after the officials of the Public Works Department (PWD) began marking the trees slated to be chopped down, even as Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama had earlier asked them to review their decision to cut trees for the proposed project.

Priests and locals have been up in arms against the felling of 1,000 deodar trees in large numbers for the widening of the road from Artola to Jageshwar temple in the district. People aware of the matter said that axing of trees in such large numbers will not only create an imbalance in the area's ecology, but will also harm religious sentiments.

Naveen Bhatt, vice-chairman, Jageshwar Temple Management Committee, Almora, said, "Some loss of the environment by cutting trees is inevitable, but these deodar trees reflect the sentiments of the local people. Jageshwar temple is amid a lush green deodar forest, which is known as 'Daruk van', considered to be the home of Lord Shiva. Local residents are opposing the axing of around 1,000 trees.

{ ALMORA | ROAD WIDENING PROJECT

Residents launch a campaign against felling of deodar trees

HT Correspondent

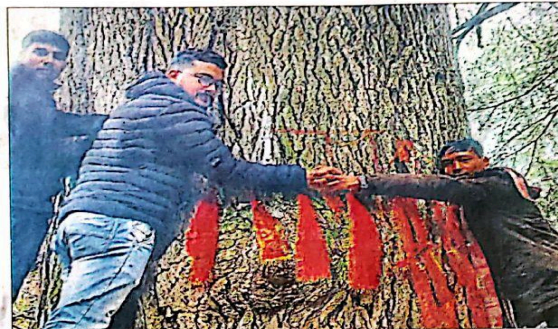
letters@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN: Local residents in Almora district on Friday tied "raksha sutra" (holy thread) around deodar trees as a sign of protest to save them from being cut down for widening of the road for Jageshwar Dham under "Manaskhand Mandir Mala Mission". It came after the officials of the public works department (PWD) began marking the trees slated for removal, even as chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had earlier asked them to review their decision to cut trees for the proposed development project.

Priests and locals have been up in arms against the felling of 1,000 deodar trees in large numbers for the widening of the road from Artola to Jageshwar temple in the district. People aware of the matter said axing of trees in such a large number will not only create an imbalance in the area's ecology but will also harm religious sentiments.

Shankar Singh Bisht, one of the active participants of the campaign against cutting down of trees, said, "People from the region gathered here to tie a holy thread to protect the trees which have been marked by the authorities for cutting. We will continue our campaign until the government gives up its decision to cut trees." "The instructions by CM Dhami are a temporary relief," he said.

Mukesh Chandra Bhatt, a priest of Jageshwar Dham, said ancient deodar trees are significant and have stood there for hundreds of years.



Local residents tie "raksha sutra" (holy thread) around deodar trees in Almora district on Friday.

HT PHOTO

"They (deodar trees) are the identity of the temple and this place. They are linked to Jageshwar, which is derived from Nageshwar Daruka. 'Daruka' signifies God in Sanskrit. Some of the trees which have been marked to be cut down are sacred and have been standing in the region for hundreds of years." "We worship them as gods," he added.

Bhatt further said the government should explore alternatives instead of cutting the trees in such a large number.

Local community members on Monday also convened a meeting and gave a memorandum to sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) NS Naganyal over the matter.

Filmmaker Vinod Kapri said, "These Deodar trees are hundreds of years old. A deodar tree can grow only 5 to 7 inches a year, if it gets good sunlight. Imagine how long it would have

taken for deodar trees 150-200 feet tall. Now there is a plan to cut them in two-three months. The issue is not just about Uttarakhand, but the country. Many trees are worshipped and revered as gods. These deodars have played an important role in conservation of our environment, they can't be cut suddenly. It is a serious issue. Everybody should talk about it."

Dehradun-based social development for communities (SDC) foundation's Anoop Nautiyal, said, "I add my voice to the growing chorus of #SaveJageshwar campaign. What's at stake is more than cutting a 1,000 trees, it's akin to erasing the identity and belief system of the region. I urge concerned people to take steps to conserve, not cut trees. It is crucial that we stand up for the cause."

Naveen Bhatt, vice-chairman, Jageshwar temple management committee, Almora said, "Some

loss of the environment by cutting trees is inevitable but these deodar trees reflect the sentiments of the local people. Jageshwar temple is amid lush green deodar forest which is called 'Daruk van', considered to be the home of Lord Shiva. Local residents are opposing the axing of around 1,000 trees."

Jageshwar temple is an ancient and a famous temple around 35 km from Almora district headquarters. It is a group of 124 ancient temples dated between the seventh to fourteen centuries.

Dhrub Singh Martolia, division forest officer (DFO) of the area said, "The ancient Jageshwar temple has been included under Manaskhand Mandir Mala Mission. Under this mission, the temple is to be beautified and better connectivity has to be ensured. Widening of the road upto 3-km is part of the mission."

"The project is in its initial stage and trees which are to be axed for the proposed road are being identified. After this process, a proposal will be sent to the central government. Such projects which are related to forests take a lot of time. There is no sense making hue and cry at the initial stage," he added.

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on March 2 instructed the concerned officials to review the survey for the proposed cutting of trees for the widening of the road under the Jageshwar Dham master plan in Almora district. Dhami said they were committed to taking the state on the path of development by maintaining a balance between ecology and economy.

HINDUSTAN TIMES
MARCH 9, 2024

March 27, 2024 : Two panels to assess high-risk glacial lakes in Uttarakhand

The state government has established two expert teams to conduct a risk assessment of five potentially perilous glacial lakes in Uttarakhand. These lakes have been identified as high-risk and prone to glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). The aim is to mitigate potential dangers associated with these lakes.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), operating under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has identified 13 such glacial lakes in Uttarakhand, and have been categorised into three levels of danger – A, B, and C, with ‘A’ indicating the highest level of risk.

Secretary Disaster Management Department Ranjit Sinha said that the initial phase of assessment will focus on the five ‘A’ category lakes, which are primarily located in the Pithoragarh and Chamoli district. Sinha outlined the process, saying the survey will occur in two phases, with the first phase scheduled for May-June this year. Sinha added, “Subsequently, instrumentation, installation of early warning systems, and implementation of disaster mitigation measures will follow suit.”

2 panels to assess high-risk glacial lakes in Uttarakhand
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Dehradun: State govt has established two expert teams to conduct a risk assessment of five potentially perilous glacial lakes in Uttarakhand which have been identified as high-risk areas prone to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). The aim is to mitigate potential dangers associated with these lakes.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), operating under the Union ministry of home affairs, has identified 13 such glacial lakes in Uttarakhand. These have been categorized into three levels of danger: A, B, and C. Among these, five lakes fall into the 'A' category indicating the highest level of risk. The remaining lakes are distributed across the 'B' and 'C' categories.

Secretary (disaster management department) Ranjit Sinha said that the initial phase of the assessment will focus on the five 'A' category lakes, which are primarily located in the Pithoragarh and Chamoli districts.

First phase of the survey scheduled for May-June this year

► Continued on P 2

(First phase to entail risk-assessment survey of 5 lakes)
File photo

The survey will occur in two phases, informed Ranjit Sinha

► Continued from P 1

Sinha outlined the process, saying the survey will occur in two phases, with the first phase scheduled for May-June this year.

Sinha said, “The entire process will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will entail conducting a risk-assessment survey of the five lakes. Subsequently, instrumentation, installation of early warning systems, and implementation of disaster mitigation measures will follow suit.” Teams conducting the surveys consist of experts from various technical institutions, including National Hydrology Institute (NIH) Roorkee, Geological Survey of India (GSI), Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), and others.

Each team will be responsible for assessing specific set of glacial lakes. The importance of the initiative was underscored during a recent high-level meeting held by disaster management division of the Union home ministry. Chief secretaries from Himalayan states convened to address the looming threat of GLOFs. It was revealed that 188 potentially-dangerous glacial lakes exist in Himalayas.

TIMES OF INDIA
MARCH 27, 2024

March 30, 2024 : Significant landslide in Silyaan village, a gaushala and five houses in danger

The danger of landslides has increased in Silyaan village following the process of Jaspur-Nirakot road cutting. Heavy rains resulted in a local gaushala hanging low, when the land on which it was standing gave away from a side. This has also threatened the existence of five houses in the vicinity.

The villagers have asked for immediate action from the authorities. The village pradhan Jitendra Gusain said that this has happened due to the lackadaisical attitude of the people from the Public Works Department (PWD) and he had informed the executive engineer.

He added that Neeraj Agarwal, Executive Engineer of PWD Bhatwari block paid a visit with his team after eight days. Agarwal assured the village people that proper nets will be put around the landslide area and safety works will be carried out soon.

सिल्याण गांव में भारी भूस्खलन गोशाला और पांच भवन खतरे में जसपुर निराकोट सड़क की कटिंग के दौरान हुआ भूस्खलन सक्रिय

संवाद न्यूज एजेंसी

उत्तरकाशी। जसपुर-निराकोट सड़क कटिंग के दौरान सिल्याण गांव में भूस्खलन की स्थिति गंभीर होती जा रही है। बृहस्पतिवार रात यहां भारी भूस्खलन होने के कारण पहाड़ी पर बनी गोशाला भी लटक गई।

वहीं भूस्खलन के कारण पांच भवनों के लिए खतरा अधिक बढ़ गया है। ग्रामीणों ने विभाग से जल्द सुरक्षात्मक कार्य करने की मांग की है। जसपुर गांव के प्रधान जितेंद्र गुसाई ने बताया कि लोक निर्माण विभाग की लापरवाही के कारण जसपुर-निराकोट सड़क कटिंग के दौरान सिल्याण गांव के नीचे



सिल्याण में भूस्खलन की जद में आई गोशाला। स्रोत: जागरूक पाठक

भूस्खलन हुआ था। शुरुआत में यह बहुत कम था, लेकिन गत सप्ताह भूस्खलन अधिक बढ़ गया और तीन भवनों में दरार आ गई। वहीं दो अन्य भवनों को भी खतरा बना हुआ है।

पूर्व प्रधान गब्बर सिंह ने बताया कि गत सप्ताह हुए भूस्खलन के बाद भी विभाग के अधिकारी मौके पर नहीं पहुंचे। समय पर सुरक्षा के उपाय नहीं होने के कारण बृहस्पतिवार रात

यहां दोबारा भारी भूस्खलन हुआ। जिससे ग्रामीणों में दहशत है। प्रधान गुसाई ने इसकी सूचना विभाग के अधिशासी अभियंता को दी। जिसके बाद घटना के आठ दिन बाद लोक निर्माण विभाग भटवाड़ी खंड के अधिशासी अभियंता नीरज अग्रवाल टीम के साथ मौके पर पहुंचे। ग्रामीणों ने उनसे जल्द ही सुरक्षात्मक कार्य करने की मांग की है।

ग्रामीणों का कहना है कि जल्द ही सुरक्षा के उपाय नहीं किया तो आगामी बरसात में यह बड़ी आपदा का रूप ले लेगा। ईडं नीरज अग्रवाल ने आश्वासन दिया कि जल्द ही भूस्खलन जोन में जाली लगाकर सुरक्षा कार्य शुरू किया जाएगा।

AMAN UJALA

MARCH 30, 2024

March 30, 2024 : Forest fires rage in Uttarakhand as rangers deployed on poll duty

The onset of summer and gusty winds have triggered a surge in forest fire incidents across various regions in Uttarakhand, including Gopeshwar, Uttarkashi, Kedarnath and Alaknanda. Of these, the Nagnath range in Kedarnath division has been engulfed in flames for several days, leading to an estimated loss of at least two hectares of forest land.

Forest fires are a recurring menace in Uttarakhand, exacerbated by factors such as dry weather conditions and human activities like stubble burning. With the current strain on resources due to election duties, the ability of authorities to respond promptly to such incidents is severely compromised.

Despite the challenges, foresters said they are committed to containing the fires and mitigating their impact on the ecosystem. "We feel that urgent action is needed to address the staff shortages. This will ensure adequate resources are available to combat the escalating threat of fires", a senior official said.

7 Hectares Of Reserved Forest Land Destroyed In One Month
 Tanmayee Tyagi
 @timesgroup.com

Dehradun: The onset of summer and gusty winds have triggered a surge in forest fire incidents across various regions in Uttarakhand, including Gopeshwar, Uttarkashi, Kedarnath, and Alaknanda. Of these, the Nagnath range in Kedarnath division has been engulfed in flames for several days, leading to an estimated loss of at least two hectares of forest land.

Rudraprayag divisional forest officer (DFO) Abhimanyu Singh said, "Although we have managed to control the fire in most areas, the challenging terrain is posing difficulties. Our team is working tirelessly to completely extinguish the blaze."

Uttarkashi DFO D P Baluni said there is a need to release staff from election duty training to address the fire risks. He said, "Over a month, we have recorded over a dozen forest fire incidents, damaging to approximately seven hectares of forest land. We must free up staff from election duty to manage these

WHO WILL DOUSE WILDFIRES IN STATE?

- > Over a dozen forest fires reported in the past month; 7 hectares of forest area gutted
- > Forest fires raging in Uttarakhand: Gopeshwar, Uttarkashi, Kedarnath, Alaknanda ranges among worst affected areas
- > Nagnath range fire in Kedarnath: 2 hectares lost; ongoing struggle due to challenging terrain
- > Siro and Sinji villages affected by wildfire from stubble burning: 3 hectares of reserved forest lost
- > Pipalkoti fire controlled, but rising temp is expected to trigger more such incidents
- > Chakrata range fires contained, although shortage of manpower remains a persisting challenge

Most incidents of surface fires, controlled by forest staff, avoiding severe damage

Significant majority of field and office staff engaged in election training, hindering firefighting efforts

Request sent for relieving staff from election duty to manage forest fires effectively

Over the past month, we have recorded over a dozen forest fire incidents, damaging approximately seven hectares of forest land. We must free up staff from election duty to manage these fires effectively

— DP BALUNI | UTTARKASHI DFO

area of the reserved forest area in Chakrata range on the outskirts of Dehradun have been successfully contained, senior officials remain apprehensive about the future.

Forest fires are a recurring menace in Uttarakhand, exacerbated by factors such as dry weather conditions and human activities like stubble burning. With the current strain on resources due to election duties, the ability of authorities to respond promptly to such incidents is severely compromised.

Despite the challenges, foresters said they are committed to containing the fires and mitigating their impact on the ecosystem. "We feel that urgent action is needed to address the staff shortages. This will ensure adequate resources are available to combat the escalating threat of fires," a senior official said.

(Inputs from Abhyudaya Kotnala in Uttarkashi)

TIMES OF INDIA
 MARCH 30, 2024

About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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PS : Errors or omissions in UDAAI documentation, if any, are purely unintentional. In case any errors or key omissions are detected or any fresh updates are available for events that are already documented, SDC Foundation may kindly be notified at email id contactsdcuk@gmail.com. We shall make the necessary corrections in subsequent versions of the monthly reports of UDAAI.