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Flood wipes out lifelines

Absence of hospitals will hamper medical assistance

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BANGALORE: As the murky waters of north Karnataka recede, the State Government is faced with the formidable task of rebuilding a region whose communication infrastructure, especially road network, was substantially wiped out by incessant rain and consequent floods.

As the waters from the region's swollen rivers plowed through villages, washing away homesteads, flooding towns and villages and snapping power lines, as much as 19 per cent or 5,439 km of the State's total state highway network — 28,311 km — suffered heavy to moderate damage.

The destruction of the transportation network was worsened by the number of bridges — 1,375 — that were either washed away completely or breached by the flood waters. The estimated loss to the road network has been conservatively pegged



ONLY WAY OUT: People climb a ladder to get on to the bridge which collapsed during floods in Potnal Halla, connecting Sindhanur to Manvi, near Manvi. DH PHOTO/ANAND BAKSHI

at Rs 500 crore. Human misery has been compounded by the disappearance of social infra-

structure like public health centres and government hospitals. Their absence in some parts of

north Karnataka will hamper medical assistance to those who have begun to be afflicted by water-borne diseases.

Some of the highways have remained closed to traffic as they have either caved in or washed away in the floods. These are National Highway-63 (Ankola-Gutti road), Devasuguru-Katgodu, Naragund-Gadag, Gadag-Gajendraghar, Karwar-Illikal and Bellary-Moka State highways.

The Mantralaya bridge (connecting Devasuguru-Katgodu) in Raichur was completely washed away.

"The bridge could not sustain the water pressure. Another bridge near the thermal plant in Raichur on the same route was badly damaged. So, this route has been closed to traffic. Travellers are not taking this route at all, while the local people are taking small village roads to reach their destinations," PWD Chief Engineer (north division) Mahesh Hiremath said. Though some

vehicles have started moving in some places, the roads are in poor condition. Forget potholes, asphalted roads simply do not exist along many stretches.

PWD engineers are wondering why such a large number of bridges were washed away, especially when they should have been built keeping in mind the region's climate history and pattern.

"Bridges are designed based on the region's climatic history. They are designed for hot weather conditions. North Karnataka has not seen rain and floods of this magnitude in the last 100 years," Hiremath said.

Badly hit

National Highways Chief Engineer O K Swamy said long stretches of five major national highways were badly affected. They are: Sholapur-Mangalore, Belgaum-Goa, Mangalore-Karwar-Panaji, Hubli-Bijapur and Ankola-Gutti routes.

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