

Times of India

02 August 2018

Kochi, Kerala Dams, Record Water Level

Kerala dams on the brim three months ahead



The shutters of Malampuzha, the state's biggest irrigation reservoir, were opened on Wednesday

Shenoy, Karun
@timesgroup.com

Kochi: With the high ranges of Kerala experiencing abnormally high rains during the southwest monsoon, water inflow in state's dams have touched record levels. During the first two months of the current water year - June and July - the inflow has touched the record level of 4,464 million units, in comparison with 3,800 million units of the June-July period of 2007-08, a water year remarkable for its best inflow yet. As a result, dams have started overflowing as early as July, instead during October-November, after the northeast Monsoon.

Kerala has 59 dams of different sizes, types and purposes. You have the bigger dams like Idukki, Pamba, Kakki and Parambikkulam and mid-sized dams like Ponmudi, Sengulam and Kallarkutty. And then, there are smaller ones called 'weir' dams - like the one at Aruvikkara. There are also very smaller ones called 'pondages' and

'run-of-the-river' dams. Most of them, nearly 40, are part of hydro-electric projects. Thanks to the heavy rainfall, of these 59 dams, almost all have reached maximum capacity, except for five or six major ones.

The dams that have already opened include: Malampuzha, Aruvikkara, Bhoothathankettu, Kallada, Lower Periyar, Malankara, Mangalam, Maniar, Neyyar, Peechi, Peppara and Siruvani. Those waiting to reach their full capacity are Idukki, Idamalayar, Kundala and Madupatty.

"We got a strong pre-monsoon and first monsoon showers this year. Monsoon was strong not only in Kerala, but also in Karnataka, the other state that shares the Western Ghats," said a top official with the KSEB.

What triggered this peculiar situation is the excessive rain falls in six districts of Kerala - these are the districts that received 20% - 59% extra rain, compared to a normal year's showers. According to the Indian Meteorological Depart-

ment's figures, Idukki recorded 49% excess rains during June 1-July 25, 2018, the highest in percentage across the state. While Palakkad received 41% extra rains during the period, Kottayam received 43% extra rain, Ernakulam received 39% more showers. The other two districts that receive excess rains are Kozhikode (20%) and Malappuram (23%).

During a normal year, KSEB uses the sudden inflow of water during monsoon very wisely. "We do store the water during the first monsoon in large dams like Idukki and conduct the maintenance of the related power stations then. On the other hand, we have the relatively smaller dams, which are easily filled and spilled, where we try to generate maximum electricity to minimize wastage of water," the official who was quoted earlier said. "However, this year, even the big dams are also nearing maximum capacity and our main concerns are the safety of the people and minimizing spillage," he added.