Vulnerability of Chennai

What is the issue?

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- Since 2015, the northeast monsoon season descended as a cataclysm on Chennai.
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- The impending monsoon brings a measure of foreboding and anxiety to residents.
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What is the status of Chennai in 2015 monsoon?

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- The unprecedented heavy rain between November 30 and December 2 in 2015 was due to active El Nino.
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- The quantum of rainfall was high, but it was not the rain alone that was responsible for the disaster that followed.
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- A key element that is still being pointed out was the reportedly tardy release of excess water from Chembarambakkam Lake.
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- Which flooded the entire city and led to the loss of many lives and property worth several crores.
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- Rampant encroachments that stood in the path of the water, giving residents insufficient warning to leave their homes, as the floodwaters raced to the city.
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- Water entered homes, over several floors, and washed out people and their possessions.
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What are the impacts of recent monsoon showers in Chennai?

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- The monsoon of 2017 came, after a summer of drought, as the city struggled to find water from multiple sources to meet its drinking water needs.
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- Chennai district has so far registered 674.8 mm of rain this season, this is 70% more than the average of 397.9 mm for the season.
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- The city’s four reservoirs that had dried out are still only over a third full.
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- The first showers were intense and left many parts in a shambles water logging on the roads and water entering homes in low-lying areas.
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- People had to move away, afraid that the next shower would lead to a repeat of the nightmare of 2015.
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- According to initial estimates by the Chennai Corporation, at least 15% of the 471 bus route roads were damaged.
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- 115 places were still waterlogged in the city and its suburbs and attributed it to the heavy downpour over five days.
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Why the city is so vulnerable?

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- As the city grew and expanded beyond its core, it was built over water bodies that were cleared out to make space for human settlements.
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- As more and more people moved to urban areas, these settlements filled out and the resources soon grew inadequate for the burgeoning population dependent on them.
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- Natural draining paths were built over, In addition, years of rampant encroachment on water bodies and lake beds did not help.
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- Inadequate monsoon preparation, in terms of desilting tanks and deepening

water channels.
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- Storm water drains and removing encroachment, has not been adequately addressed across the city and suburbs.
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Way forward

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- The city was scarcely prepared for the monsoon, Three years on, the level of preparedness leaves much to be desired.
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- Environmental activists insist that drastic action to evict encroachers and those who sit on water bodies must be taken.
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- Better preparedness of official machinery to face the floods across the city, is crucial.
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- It is the only way a natural calamity is not exacerbated by man-made errors.
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Source: The Hindu

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