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## Kerala, Heavy Rainfall, Widespread Damage, Flood

### Mounting rain havoc keeps State on edge

Death toll rises to 14 as three drown in Kottayam and one in Malappuram

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Packing a punch, the resurgent monsoon caused widespread havoc across Kerala on Monday as the government scrambled to take stock of the flood situation in various districts and step up relief activities.

Four persons reportedly drowned in Kottayam and Malappuram districts, taking the death toll in the current monsoon spell to 14.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Revenue Minister E. Chandrasekharan convened a videoconference with District Collectors to assess the extent of the havoc. Emergency services were put on standby as heavy rain pummelled most districts. As many as 27,031 persons belonging to 6,065 families have been shifted to 190 re-

lief camps. Across the State, roads and houses were swamped by surging floodwaters.

Rivers overflowed and standing crops were damaged. Roads were closed to traffic and trains cancelled or delayed following the torrential downpour.

Central Kerala was the worst affected by the fresh spell of rain. Large swathes of land in Alappuzha were inundated and the Alappuzha-Changanassery road turned into a river, bringing traffic to a grinding halt.

Landslips caused extensive damage to crops and property in the highlands in Idukki, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts, keeping residents on their toes.

Strong waves battered the coastal areas, damaged sea walls and forced the evacua-



The Alappuzha-Changanassery road turned into a river, bringing traffic to a halt on Monday.

tion of hundreds of people. Floodwaters breached the bunds of paddy fields in Kuttanad.

The weather office has forecast heavy to very heavy rain in Kerala till July 20. Fishermen have been ad-

vised not to venture out as the strong winds are likely to make sea conditions rough to very rough.

The Met Centre here said the current spell was triggered by a well-marked low-pressure area over north

coastal Odisha and neighbourhood. "It is for the first time since 2013 that Kerala has received such heavy rain in the initial phase of the monsoon," Met Centre Director K. Santhosh said.

Putting the Collectors on

alert, the Chief Minister directed them to prevent the spread of epidemics and keep hospitals equipped for emergencies.

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He asked them to assess the damage and disburse compensation to the affected people speedily. The meeting decided to deploy heavy pumps to drain seawater from the flooded areas along the Alappuzha coast.

The rain caused widespread damage to houses in

Wayanad, Pathanamthitta, and Kottayam. The State control room said 36 houses were destroyed and 1,214 damaged by the rain since July 9. The crop loss is estimated to be ₹1,475.92 lakh.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala has urged the government to launch relief measures on a war footing in the wake of

the heavy rain. Alleging that the failure to repair damaged seawalls and groynes had amplified the damage, he called for providing free ration and other assistance for the affected families.

The CPI State council appealed to the government to respond to the monsoon havoc with emergency relief activities. It also demanded

the Centre to take up relief work.

CPI(M) leader and Administrative Reforms Committee chairman V.S. Achuthanandan called for stern action against unauthorised constructions and environmental violations which aggravate the crisis caused by natural disasters.