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## Kochi, Flood, Heavy Rainfall, Train-Bus Passengers, Restrictions, Delay in Train Services

### District inundated: Train and bus passengers have a harrowing time

Passengers hope the water levels recede and the restrictions are lifted soon

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SINDHU Nair is employed in the government service and travels to her workplace in Thrissur from Ernakulam every working day. However, she is on leave now, not because of any health issue, but because of the rain.

With the district experiencing heavy downpour, several trains and buses are staying off the tracks and roads, respectively, which has affected many people, especially office-goers like Sindhu.

They have to either take leave or find alternate means of travel. Nearly all office goers, in particular those who shuttle up and down the Thiruvananthapuram-Kottayam-Ernakulam-Thrissur-Palakkad route have been facing a harrowing time for the past four days.

"The uncertainty whether the trains are running or not was unbearable. I didn't want to take any chances. So, I took leave. I couldn't imagine being stranded at some place without any means of transportation and that, too, when it was raining heavily," said Sindhu.

Several others had the same thing to say. "Taking leave was the simplest and safest option. With several roads and many

low-lying areas in the district getting inundated, even buses have stopped conducting services along the routes," said Rema, a government employee working in Ernakulam.

For those who decided to try their luck, commutation has not been a thrilling experience.

"Can you imagine waiting at a mosquito-infested, leaking, wet platform having barely a few working benches? If you add hunger and cold to the equation... Well, that's what we have been enduring for the past few days," said Anil Regi, a shop assistant in Ernakulam.

Speed restrictions and service curtailment has left many train passengers high and dry.

"Yesterday, I boarded the Palaruvi Express from Ernakulam North at 7.10 pm. It normally reaches Piravom Road by around 8 pm. But due to speed

restrictions, all the trains before it were running late and hence, the train reached Piravom Road only by 9.30 pm. It stopped at every station for around 45 minutes," said Thomas V, who owns a shop in Ernakulam. "I really hope the water level recedes and the speed restrictions are lifted. I have never seen so much rain in my life," he said.

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#### RAIN TROUBLE

### Rlys keeping an eye out for mitigating disaster

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BESIDES flooding train tracks, the heavy rain in the district has led to uprooting of trees on the tracks at many places, delaying train services for the past few days. This happened the other day too, when a tree fell on the tracks near Mulanthuruthy halting traffic along the route.

Railways authorities, however, blamed private land owners for the issue. "All trees deemed dangerous were felled as part of the monsoon drive initiated by the Railways. The trees that got uprooted and fell were the ones located on private properties. The owners did not allow us to fell the trees and due to their non-cooperation, we had to deal with trees falling on the tracks," said an officer.

"However, we were prompt in removing the obstruction from the tracks to allow smooth running of trains," he said.

The continuous downpour is also posing another danger – landslides. This possibility is huge in areas where the tracks go between deep, steep ledges.

"We have shored up all vulner-

able ledges and a team has been deployed to carry out round-the-clock checks. Inspections are being done to check whether the tracks have developed cracks or have been damaged due to the rust. They are also checking the strength of the tracks, whether there is any abnormal flow of water and also the stability of the land," he said.

If the team finds any signs of a possible landslide, they will immediately alert the next station and ensure the trains are stopped, he said.

The officer said the decision to end the Palaruvi Express service at Kollam for the time being was taken after a minor problem was detected between Bhagvathipuram and Punalur.

"It is a dark section and a forested area. There are many deep cutting and to rectify any defect, we will need the approval of the Forest Department. On Tuesday, a high-level team of engineers had visited the area and assessed the situation. They will be approaching the Forest Department. Since the region comes under Madurai Division, they will be the ones taking any action," he said.

