

Command and control arms of govt working 24/7

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Thiruvananthapuram: Two command and control arms of the government — the main control room functioning at the secretariat and the state police monitoring room functioning under intelligence division of the state police — is working round-the-clock for information gathering, dissemination and rescue operations.

The main control room—room number 372 in the main block of the secretariat, is the office of additional chief secretary (revenue) P H Kurien. Towards one side of the square-shaped room is a mini-conference table where the whole of the disaster management unit led by member secretary Sekhar Kuriakose is stationed with their laptops, mobile and landline phones. Kurien is in control of the war-room, monitoring the developments at every second.

The control room is being monitored by chief secretary's office just under 10 metres away. On Independence Day, as the rains were lashing across the state with all fury, the secretariat was functioning almost like on any working day. While the chief minister stayed in his office overnight on Wednesday directing various arms of the government and the central forces and liaising with his Tamil Nadu counterpart as the water levels in Mullaperiyar went up, the officials including chief secretary Tom Jose was busy speaking to his Tamil Nadu counterpart Girija Vaidyanathan, and using his personal rapport with union defence secretary Sanjay Mitra and union civil aviation secretary R N Choubey to

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cut down bureaucratic tapes for Central aid in the hour of crisis. The chief secretary's contacts during his days in ministry of defence also came in handy for the state in getting more resources for undertaking relief operations.

Water resources department officials including secretary Tinku Biswal were ready with the minute-by-minute technical data on water from dams, especially Mullaperiyar, for sharing with Tamil Nadu.

The state police monitoring room, abbreviated as SPMR, under ADGP (intelligence) TK Vinod Kumar is busy gathering details from the field, from the 700-odd officials posted across the state attached to each and every police stations in the state. The intelligence officials are updating the SPMR with real-time data and feeding the disaster management control room whenever lacunae is being noticed.

The watchful eyes of intelligence officials, better known as state special branch, are also scanning the shortcomings and even report any kind of callous attitude from any government arm, including the police, from the field. As per the data of the SPMR till 12 pm on Thursday, there are almost 1, 21, 000 people in 1,024 relief camps across the state.

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