

Two columns of ETF arrived from Pune in IAF AN-32 aircraft to state capital

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Thiruvananthapuram: Centre has deployed more contingents of armed forces, aircraft and boats for relief and rescue operations in the state, especially in the worst-hit districts of Pathanamthitta and Ernakulam, where thousands of people remained stranded on Thursday.

Three more columns of Army Engineering Task Force (ETF) reached state to strengthen rescue operations. Two columns of ETF – which arrived from Pune in IAF AN-32 aircraft to state capital – were moved to Ernakulam and Thiruvalla, while one column which landed at Kozhikode airport moved to Thrissur. The ETF team carried boats, 900kg ration and 500kg of other relief items.

A 56-member team from national disaster response force (NDRF), Pune, too reached Thiruvananthapuram Airport technical area in the afternoon. The team proceeded to affected areas in KSRTC buses, while rescue gears and food supplies – which arrived along with the NDRF team – were taken in seven trucks to both districts.

The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) meeting held in the morning to scale up assistance to the state took stock of the situation and directed immediate and continued assistance. Till then, 18 teams of NDRF, nine columns and eight teams of Engineering Task Force (ETF) of the Army, 22 teams of Coast Guard, 24 diving teams of Navy along with helicopters, aircraft, boats, equipment, buoys and lifejackets has been dispatched to assist Kerala in rescue operations as well as for evacuation of stranded people.

The headquarters of Southern Air Command located at Akkulam Thiruvananthapuram is coordinating the humanitarian assistances and disaster relief (HADR) operations of the Air Force. All IAF aircraft are operating from Air Force technical area Shanghumugham and INS Garuda, Kochi.

As many as five Mi-17V5 and three advanced light helicopters (ALH) conducted multiple sorties and rescued 150 persons stranded at Pathanamthitta, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. The rescued persons were safely transported to Air Force Station Shanghumugham, Varkala Helipad and INS Garuda.

One team of NDRF consists of 20 personnel and 15 tonnes of relief material. IAF will be airlifting these teams using their IL-76, C-17 Globemaster and C-130J Super Hercules aircraft from various parts of India including Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Bathinda, Ahmedabad and New Delhi.



Rakesh Nair



Jipson Sikhera

Two columns of 120 Engineering Regiment, based in Pune, arrive at Air Force technical area in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday

E Gokul



An elderly woman being evacuated in Kozhikode

Rescue efforts hampered by lack of boats

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Kochi: Lack of enough boats is hampering rescue efforts in parts of the Ernakulam district including Aluva, which was one of the first place to be submerged. With flood waters started entering Kochi city in areas like Edappally, Ponekkara, Peraandoor and Elammakkara on Thursday late evening rescuers and relief providers are likely to face more strain.

As rescuers ran short of boat for rescue operations, Matsyafed was asked to provide boats. "We handed over seven onboard engines and eight country boats to the fire and rescue department," said George, district manager, Matsyafed.

Fire and rescue services personnel from Aluva fire station rescued many persons stranded in the nearby areas. "We have deployed more than 200 personnel.

Still, we are unable to attend to all the calls. However, we could save some families," a fire and rescue official said. Many living in areas like Bank junction and Uliyanoor also had to be moved out.

Many families in Thuruthu, a Periyar River islet, were trapped after it was flooded. Though, the residents made SOS messages, authorities found it difficult to rescue them as the number of calls grew.

Many residents were stranded in Eloor, Desham, Purayar, Chovvara, Kadungalloor, Chendamangalam, Paravur, Kalady, Angamly, Nedumbassery, Athani, Kanjoor, Malayattoor, Manickamangalam, Malayattoor, Kodanad, Marampilly, Keezhmad, Vallam, Okkal, Perumbavoor, Muvattupuzha and Kothamangalam areas. With the help of Navy and Coast Guard, some of the stranded persons were airlifted. The flood situation in Ernakulam

has already started to hit essential services including transport, power and water supply, hospitals, telecom and shops.

As the national highway near Thottakattukara and Company junction in Aluva was flooded, traffic through the road became impossible. Functioning of KSRTC bus station and private bus stand was completely stopped. Train services had to be stopped considering possible inundation of railway overbridge near Aluva station.

With water in Periyar River has high turbidity, Kerala Water Authority which generates 300 million litre per day (MLD) had to reduce the generation to 50%. Power supply to Kochi city was disrupted after water entered KSEB substation at Kaloor. A district-level control room began functioning at Pathadipalam rest

house. There is a total of 269 camps housing 1,433 families and 52,604 people.

A team of more than 100 officers belonging to various forces were involved in the rescue and relief operation. Boats and rafts became a major requirement as roads submerged.

Many in flood relief camps said that they are having a tough time. "Places we never expected to have flooded even have got inundated. Even those areas where relief camps are situated have got marooned. Since Wednesday night, we are not even getting food," said Seby V Bastin, councillor, Aluva Municipality.

A 60-member team of Police and Fire Force personnel is camping at Aluva. A 14-member disaster response team of Coast Guard has been deployed at Chelamattom region coming under Muvattupuzha division.

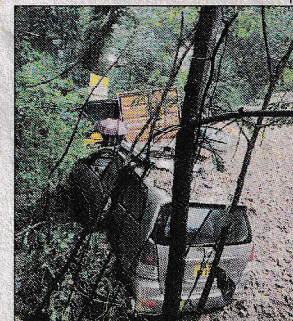
18 killed, three missing

Thrissur: At least 18 people died, and three others went missing in various incidents related to rain fury in Thrissur district till Thursday evening. There are widespread fears that the toll is likely to go up when the debris in landslide areas is cleared.

The major casualty so far was at Kooranchery near Wadakkanchery where 12 bodies were recovered from the debris of a landslide. Four people were

rescued from there with serious injuries and they have been admitted to the ICU of the Thrissur Medical College Hospital.

More people are feared trapped under the debris. Five houses were destroyed in the landslide, and more number of people had come to one of the houses to attend a family function. Two people died when their house near Poomala collapsed on late Wednesday night.



MORE DUTY ON LIQUOR TO MOBILIZE FUNDS

Thiruvananthapuram: The state, which has been facing a severe financial crunch, has decided to mobilize more funds for disaster relief operations by increasing liquor prices. A special cabinet meeting held here on Thursday decided to increase the excise duty on liquor. "Yes, there is financial resource crunch. We shall overcome it. As additional resource mobilization to chief minister's disaster relief management fund, excise duty on liquor has been increased by 0.5% to 3.5% for a period of 100 days," said finance minister TM Thomas Isaac. The state finance department expects to mop up an additional revenue of Rs 230 crore. The decision has been made in view of the high liquor sales during Onam. During the festival season, over the years, the state has been witnessing huge liquor sales, and the finance department has been eyeing the proceeds from the sales for mobilizing funds. TNN