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Kochi, Kuttampuzha, Idamalayar, Heavy Rain, Tribal Colonies in Peril

**As rivers
breach banks,
tribal colonies
in peril**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

THE monsoon has brought a flood of miseries for the tribal families living in the deep forests under the Kuttampuzha and Idamalayar range offices in Ernakulam district. As the rivers have breached the banks and the strong currents of the Pooyamkutty river, the tribals are stuck. For the past week, tribal colonies have been cut off from the outside world and with dwindling stocks of rice and essential provisions, the families are on the verge of starvation.

On Sunday night, Toby, a resident of Vellaramkuthu tribal colony in Kuttampuzha, died of heart attack as he could not be taken to the hospital in time. Though he complained of chest pain in the evening, no vehicle could reach the colony as the Pooyamkutty river was in spate. The Manikandanchal, the only bridge connecting the tribal colonies with the outside world, was submerged. The tribals were afraid of using the country boats to cross the river. Though he was taken to Kothamangalam taluk hospital in the night, he was declared brought dead.

Dealing with the vagaries of nature is a routine scenario for residents in Variyam, Thalavachapara, Kunchippara, Thera, Vellaramkuthu and Uriampetti, the major tribal settlement colonies in the district, when the monsoon begins. Though the residents of Uriampetti have access to Anakulam in Idukki district, the river on the other side is also in spate.

"We have been cut off from the outside world and there is no way to even take patients to a hospital in case of an emergency, particularly with the submerging of the Manikandanchal bridge. We procure essentials from Kuttampuzha once a week and are surviving on the stocks left with the petty shops in the colony which will not suffice for more than two days. We are waiting for the water to subside to cross the river," said Girish, a resident of Uriampetti colony over the phone. With an incessant rain lashing the forest area for the past week, the tribals are not able to collect forest produce, which they sell to earn a living.