

# Centre steps in as Kerala floods take 'very serious' turn

**DEVASTATION** Rajnath monitors situation, assures all possible help

**HT Correspondent**

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** Kerala struggled on Sunday to cope with floods that have inundated half the state, left at least 40 people dead and a trail of devastation that chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan described as the worst disaster to have befallen the southern Indian state with a population of 35 million.

Union home minister Rajnath Singh promised all possible central help to Kerala to deal with the unprecedented flooding after carrying out an aerial survey of the flood-hit areas with Vijayan, who sent out an SOS for help to "all quarters".

Singh announced immediate relief of ₹100 crore to the state. The Kerala government put the total loss from floods at ₹8,316 crore. Vijayan sought immediate



■ **Army, navy, air force and NDRF teams have been deployed in the worst-hit districts of Idukki and Wayanad (seen above).**

PTI

relief of ₹1,220 crore.

The Union minister praised agencies involved in rescue and relief operations for their efforts and said more help will be announced after a visit by central government officials.

"After viewing the disaster, I reached the conclusion that the situation in Kerala is very serious," Singh said. "Both the Centre and state will work together to meet the challenge."

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## Kerala

“Kerala is facing the worst floods in over seven decades. More than half of the state is flood-hit. The whole nation is with the suffering people of the state,” said Singh, who attended a high-level meeting to review measures taken to deal with fall-out of the flooding.

Army, navy, air force and National Disaster Response Force teams were deployed in many areas of the worst-hit Idukki and Wayanad districts. Besides thousands of houses, many bridges and roads were swept away by flash floods. State public works department minister G Sudhakaran said at least 500 km of roads were damaged. Many areas are still without power and drinking water supplies. “The state is in the midst of the worst disaster in its history. We face an uphill task in rebuilding devastated areas. We need help from all quarters,” said the chief minister. He made a special request to non-resident Indians to help tide over the crisis.

The flood-hit people narrated their plight to Vijayan, some of them telling the chief minister that they had lost everything they had earned, and it would be difficult for them to piece together their lives again. The CM said special ‘adalats’ (courts) will be set up to issue duplicate copies of documents and educational certificates to families that had lost the documents. Although torrential rains that have pounded the state in recent days subsided, a red alert will continue to be force in eight districts as the weather office predicted two more days of heavy rain in the districts. Over 55,000 people have been shifted to relief camps in the last four days. “The timely deployment of rescue teams helped save many lives,” said state revenue minister E Chandrasekharan. The water level in the swollen Idukki reservoir was reduced below 2,398 feet (maximum capacity is 2,403 feet) on Sunday following a brief let-up in rains, said the district administration. The water levels in other dams also came down -- 26 dams were opened for the first time to release excess water. Idukki received 40 mm of rainfall on Sunday; it received 120 mm two days ago.