

# Flood situation continues to be grim

Rajaram Satapathy | TNN

**Bhubaneswar:** With no place to take shelter, no water to drink, no food to eat and children crying in hunger, the situation in Orissa's flood affected areas is turning grimmer with every passing day.

Such reports have started trickling in from different parts of the flood-hit areas as the state government, facing shortage of boats to rescue marooned people, is yet to reach the places where lakhs of people are still battling with their lives for the fifth day in a row.

Amidst this, the weather office on Tuesday reported another low pressure and predicted widespread rain across the state. This has created panic among the flood victims, who are now spending their time under the open sky either in marooned houses or on highways.

The latest official figure has put the toll at 35. What has further added to the plight of the people are the fresh breaches reported in Mahanadi and its tributaries. At least 100 breaches have been reported so far.

Besides, hundreds of villages in Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack and Puri districts and towns like Banki are still surrounded by water. The official estimate put the figure of 'still marooned' people at 1.25 lakh from amongst the nearly four million people affected by the current flood, the worst since 1982. Though the government maintained that it had deployed over 1,400 boats and has, by far, evacuated over 3,00,000 people, the measures are still meagre in view of the magnitude of the flood devastation spread over 18 districts.

Meanwhile, outflow from the Hirakud reservoir has been drastically curtailed and the water level in

Mahanadi has started falling. "But this is unlikely to lessen the flood havoc in the next few days as villages are still under knee deep water and people have little scope to return to their houses," a senior official of the revenue department said. Airdropping of dry food and drinking water continued on Tuesday in vast areas for the fourth day consecutively.

The situation in Puri worsened on Tuesday where an estimated 5,000 tourists, including some foreigners, were stranded as both road and rail communication to the holy city remained cut off due to the flood water. The East Coast Railways (ECoR) repaired the damaged track near Delang under Khurda Road division and resumed the train services in the afternoon. Several trains like Howrah-Puri Express, Howrah-Puri Sri Jagannath Express leaving Howrah and Hatia-Puri Tapaswini Express leaving Hatia were cancelled due to non-availability of corresponding rake. "We are observing the behaviour of the track, depending on which other trains would resume in due course," a railway official said.

Reports from Anugul said at Athamallik flood victims held protests demanding relief. They said for the sixth day, marooned people in the area had not got relief.

"People are suffering in relief camps. There is neither sufficient food nor water," alleged Rasananda Naik, a resident of Nilakanthapur village. Relief had not yet reached the village. The swollen Mahanadi has inundated at least 67 villages in Athmallick sub-division. Similar reports were also received from Jajpur areas where people at Santipur, Benapur and Kusunpur areas blocked the NH- 5 (A) at Benapur Chhak demanding relief materials.



Sanjib Das

Residents of a village near Pipili wade through floodwaters on Tuesday

## More rain, more miseries

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapada:** Over seven lakh marooned villagers of flood-affected Kendrapada district continued to battle the fury of surging rivers for the fifth consecutive day on Tuesday as incessant rainfall for the past two days added to their woes.

While several families huddled under tents made of plastic sheets and bamboo poles with only straw mats to protect them from the rising mud and slush around the river embankments, others tried to take shelter on a tree branch and make miserable attempts to protect their children from the rain by cov-

ering them with their sarees.

Such is the state of the villagers that they keep calling out to each other to check on them. With no electricity, candles are their only hope for both light and warmth.

While the district administration maintain that they are doing everything in their capacity, people of this area claim that they have been left to fend for themselves in the absence of any kind of relief material.

"Torrential rain during the past two days, caused by a depression in the Bay of Bengal, wreaked havoc in the flood-affected areas. We have provided polythene covers for the

people in these areas," said district emergency officer Bijaya Parida. When contacted, district collector Sishirkanta Panda said that 290 boats, including 90 motorized boats, are now working to rescue the stranded people in these flood-affected areas.

"Torrential rain has hampered relief and rescue work. Most of the boats are ill-equipped to protect the people. The district administration has not been able to provide them with raincoats or lifejackets. That is why we are reluctant to go into the flooded zones," said Kalindi Behera, a boatman of Shyamasundarpur.