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TN, Pudhucherry ignored precise cyclone warning

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By [Kumar Chellappan](#) | Place: Chennai | Agency: DNA

Though the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, Hyderabad, started issuing warnings from December 25 through the Indian Meteorological Department about Cyclone Thane prowling in the Bay of Bengal and the exact time and region where it would strike, the civil administration was found wanting when it came to rescue and relief operations. Power supply and telecommunication facilities are yet to be restored in Cuddalore.

"Even the district collector is depending on the police wireless network to communicate with the outside world," said a senior official in Cuddalore.

Not a single fisherman ventured out to sea since INCOIS released its first advisory on December 25. "Organisations like the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation took pains to disseminate the information to the fishing community along the Tamil Nadu coast," said Dr TM Balakrishnan Nair, senior scientist, INCOIS.

Hundreds of huts and small houses along coastal Cuddalore were blown away by high-speed winds and the residents had to spend the night without a roof over their heads as there were no places to accommodate them.

"Though the government has been claiming that it has built cyclone shelters, we could not locate any shelters when the need came," said KV Kannan, a farmer in Cuddalore district.

He said supply of drinking water and milk in the district has been paralysed since Saturday. "We should have provisions at least to help the people staying along the coastal areas," said Kannan.

Cyclone shelters built along the coastal regions in Tamil Nadu are being used as schools and boarding rooms for policemen.

Prof Vinod Chandra Menon, former member, National Disaster Management Authority of India, said the civilian administration has to be tuned to face emergency situations like Cyclone Thane.

"Tamil Nadu lies close to tsunamigenic regions and hence the disaster management authorities should be trained like the commandoes of the Indian Army. With the kind of advance warnings issued by institutions like INCOIS, the government should have a system in place to evacuate the people to safety and protect infrastructure which are always under the threat of natural calamities," Prof Menon told DNA.

Prof Menon said the response system should be sensitive to early warning alerts.

"This is going to be tested again and again as we all know that during May to December there is going to be cyclones in the Bay of Bengal," he said.

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