

Deccan Herald 7.2.04

Vardah strikes: Restoring power a major challenge, says CM; police pressed into action 12,000 evacuated in Andhra Pradesh

HYDERABAD, DHNS: More than 12,000 people living along Nellore coast were evacuated and shifted to safer places in the wake of severe cyclonic storm Vardah.

"So far 40 mandals in Chittoor and six mandals in Nellore have been affected by the impact of the cyclone. As the weather department has forecast rain till Tuesday night, we have requested the NDRF men to assist us in cutting uprooted trees on highways," Andhra Pradesh Disaster Management Authority director Seshagiri Rao said.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, reviewing the situation from his Command Control Room in Amaravati, directed district collectors to provide shelter and food to the evacuated people.

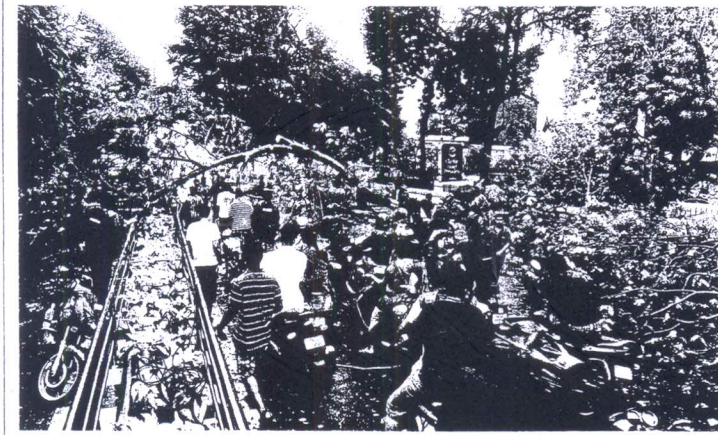
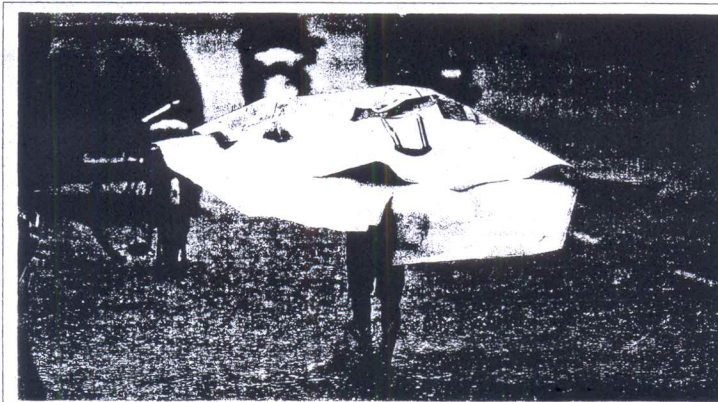
He said restoration of power supply will be a major challenge, as at least 80 poles in Nellore and 40 poles in Chittoor were uprooted by strong winds.

At least 11 villages in Nellore are facing total blackout. Andhra Pradesh DGP Sambasiva Rao also directed the police to help revenue staff in restoring normalcy.

Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana, who is camping in Nellore to oversee the rescue and relief operations, said Vakadu and Tada received 4.8 cm and 3 cm rain respectively on Monday. In Tirumala, rain water inundated the main entrance to the temple.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) staff summoned fire tenders and the water was being pumped out. The South Central Railway (SCR) and the APSRTC have cancelled several services on the Vijayawada-Sullurpeta-Chennai route.

According to an SCR press release, Vijayawada Chennai Vijayawada Pnakim Express has been diverted via Renigunta and Arrakkonam. Some other express trains on the Chennai route have also been diverted via Arrakkonam. In



IN DISTRESS: (Top) A person wades through a road filled with water during heavy rainfall as cyclone Vardah made landfall near Chennai coast on Monday. (Above) Uprooted trees block the road following a storm in Chennai on Monday. PT

Chittoor, standing crops of sugarcane and mangoes were damaged across hundreds of acres. Traffic movement was hit on the national highway

near Rachagunuru as uprooted trees blocked the road for hours. Squally winds uprooted hoardings, tin roofs, trees and electric poles in Buradagalli,

Pallampathi, Raghunathapuram, Perapatippa, Kummara Palem and Kothapet of Nellore. In Krishnapatnam port, the No 10 caution flag was hoisted.

In many places, the sea surged up to 20 metres on to the banks. In East Godavari district, the Kakunada-Usuda seaside road was washed away.

Cyclone

Vardah, from Page 1

Weather officials expect the rain to continue through Tuesday. People remained indoors after the Tamil Nadu government issued flood warnings.

Two fishermen were reported missing off the Andhra Pradesh coast in Kakinada. The Coast Guard has deployed a ship for search and rescue operations.

"After 1994, this is the first very severe cyclonic storm to hit the Chennai coast," a senior Met official said. A Home Ministry spokesperson said in Delhi that four people were killed in the storm in Tamil Nadu.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and promised all help. **DHNS and Agencies**



Residents walk through the rain in Chennai as cyclone Vardah makes landfall on Monday. AFP

TTD steps up vigil along ghats

HYDERABAD: With heavy rain lashing Tirupati and Tirumala due to Cyclone Vardah, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has alerted its vigilance, forest and engineering wings to undertake preventive measures on the ghat roads.

During the weekly review meeting on Monday, TTD executive officer D Sambasiva Rao drew special focus in this regard.

"The vigilance, engineering and forest officials should be alert round the clock, especially at vital points, to avoid any sort of inconvenience to the pilgrims," he said.

As a precautionary measure, TTD has kept ready two JCBs — one stationed at Mokalmettu and another at Alipiri — to clear boulders in case they roll down the hills.

A team of officials comprising a deputy executive engineer, vigilance officer and forest officer has been constituted for surveillance.

DH News Service

Battery-run woodcutters in TN

Civic workers across Tamil Nadu are using battery-run electric woodcutters to clear the trees which have been uprooted under the impact of cyclone Vardah, PTI reports from Chennai.

Officials stated that a large number of trees have been uprooted in the three affected districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kauchipuram, where the workers are using hand-held electric woodcutters to clear the trees.

A government statement said 100 mobile medical teams and several teams of food safety officials are in service, and steps have already been taken to prevent spread of endemic diseases. Call centres for 108 (ambulance) and 104 (health advisories) are now "zero call waiting" to ensure unhindered assistance and Health Minister Vijaya Baskar inspected a call centre, officials said.

According to the release, adequate number of pumps and generators are being used to pump out water in low-lying areas, and separate teams comprising health, sanitary and state-run electricity monolith TANGEDCO employees are also addressing the requirements in view of the cyclone.

