Rainfall pounds Ooty; water enters houses

Times News Network

Udhagamandalam: Ooty resembled a pool as heavy rain lashed the tourist retreat on Saturday. Traffic came to a grinding halt at several places because of waterlogging.

Ooty registered 57.3mm of rainfall for nearly two hours between 11am and 1pm on the day. Except for Ooty and Cherangode, which recorded a rainfall of 17mm, none other areas in the Nilgiris received any rain.

Places such as Commercial Road, Garden Road, Ooty main bus stand, Kandal area and Charing Cross complex were badly hit by waterlogging. Rainwater mixed with sewage also entered several houses in Kandal area.

Ward 25 at Kandal was badly affected by the rain. Ward councillor Geetha staged a silent protest on the road, urging the municipality authorities to desilt the storm water drains in her ward. "I have been raising this issue at past 30 council meetings, but in vain. Another drainage line is also diverted through my ward. At least 20 houses in the ward were surrounded by water today (Saturday)," the DMK councillor said.

An activist, meanwhile, urged the municipality to concentrate on monsoon preparations.

Ramakrishnan, a local resident, said, "Only three main roads are passing through the town, that too for a stretch of three kilometres each. Most of the locations were flooded today (Saturday). Yegaraj, Ooty municipality commissioner, said they had desilted the storm water drains in Kandal area.

'Jun 4 will usher a new dawn'

CM: INDIA Stands On The Cusp Of Victory

Times News Network

Chennai: At a time when INDIA bloc leaders are meeting in New Delhi, chief minister M K Stalin said INDIA bloc leaders exposed the false image of BJP. "Through relentless campaigning, the leaders of INDIA bloc have dismantled the false image the BJP created in the public sphere. Our #INDIA bloc, formed to defeat the 10-year fascist regime of the BJP and save India, has met the expectations of the people and stands on the cusp of victory," Stalin said on X. "June 4 will usher in a new dawn for India," said Stalin

"It (INDIA bloc) has rallied a formidable coalition of democratic forces against the BJP, which thought there was nobody to challenge them. This alliance now offers hope to all Indians in the electoral arena," Stalin said.

With just three days left for counting, INDIA bloc leaders met in Delhi. There was criticism about that Stalin skipped the meeting and only party MP and treasurer T R Baalu attended the meeting.

Stalin said, "With just three days remaining until our impending victory, I urge

> There was criticism against DMK that Stalin skipped the meeting and only party MP and treasurer T R Baalu attended it

our cadre to remain vigilant during the vote counting process." He said June 4 would mark the beginning of a new dawn for India.

Meanwhile, there was a meeting of DMK district secretaries and booth level agents through video conference. DMK organisation secretary R S Bharthi gave instructions to functionaries on how to stay vigilant and to check the details in Form 17C.

After the meeting, Bharthi, speaking to reporters at DMK headquarters Anna Arivalayam, said the party had already held five phases of training sessions for booth level agents and in this virtual meeting, instructions were given on how to stay vigilant during counting.

"BJP is capable of doing anything to win the election. So, DMK which has high chances of victory need to stay vigilant. We have struggled hard. Our chief minister had toured the state to campaign for our candidates. We can't afford to lose," Bharthi said. He criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meditation in Kanyakumari by questioning the presence of cameras during meditation.

Tamil Nadu's commercial tax revenue up to ₹1,26,005 crore

Times News Network

Chennai: Revenue from commercial tax in Tamil Nadu has registered an increase, from ₹85,606.4 crore in 2020-21 to ₹1,26,005.92 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal year, as per a statement from the state govt.

The govt attributed this growth to simplified tax payment options and enhanced online portals and systems, resulting in an additional ₹40,399.5 crore over three years under the DMK administration, compared to the tenure of the preceding AIADMK govt.

The Samadhan Scheme, introduced in 2023, was highlighted for aiding in the sett-

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lement of arrears related to tax, penalty, and interest. Launched on Oct 16, 2023, the scheme facilitated the waiver of tax dues up to ₹50,000.

The commercial taxes department reported that ₹247.89 crore was collected in

tax dues exceeding ₹50,000, the highest amount collected compared to previous schemes. The department invested ₹62 crore in infrastructure and administrative reforms.

A tax research unit established on Dec 30, 2023 provided insights that led to an additional ₹510.09 crore under the integrated goods and service tax in March this year.

Collaborating with IIT Hyderabad on data analytics to examine revenue losses, the department generated an extra ₹129.77 crore in the past four months, the statement added. The govt also noted a reduction in petrol taxes in 2021, which lowered petrol prices by ₹3 per litre.

Will win historic number of seats in TN, says L Murugan

Times News Network

Madurai: BJP will win an unexpected and historic number of seats in Tamil Nadu in the Lok Sabha elections, Union minister of state (MoS) for information and broadcasting L Murugan claimed on Saturday. He reiterated that NDA will win more than 400 constituencies overall.

He was speaking to reporters after offering prayers at Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple here. Murugan said people of India are witness to the growth of the country over the past 10 years and support for PM Modi can be seen everywhere. "The INDIA alliance will not benefit the country in any way and will struggle to win even 100 seats. There is no unity in the alliance. We hearing news of leaders like M K Stalin and Mamta Banerjee not atten-

> Murugan said people of India are witness to the growth of the country over the past 10 years and support for PM Modi can be seen everywhere

ding the alliance meeting," he added.

On opposition leaders criticising PM Modi's meditation in Kanyakumari being given media coverage, Murugan said the PM had been meditating from a young age. "Like a sage or rishi, he is meditating for the well-being of all," he said. To a question, the MoS said Modi never promised to deposit Rs 15 lakh in every bank account but it was a claim fabricated by media and opposition. "BJP has

been working towards eliminating black money and we saw those with black money ending up in jail during the past 10 years. Rise in digital transactions is gradually curbing black money. In the next term, BJP will eradicate corruption completely," he said.

Earlier, at Tuticorin airport, Murugan said law and order in Tamil Nadu was deteriorating and chief minister Stalin was not acting. "Police failed to act for two days in the case where a Congress councillor and others assaulted a youth in Mettupalayam leading to his hospitalisation. He had only asked why a ward was not being cleaned. Real culprits are being protected under DMK government rule while YouTubers are getting arrested for posting content online," he added.

Two pet dogs bite 12-year-old boy

Times News Network

Chennai: In another pet Rottweiler attack on a child, a Class VIII student, Gerald, in Puzhal was mauled on Saturday, leaving him badly injured on the ear, face, chest and the back. Police said Gerald was on his way to his grandmother's house when the unleashed dog attacked him at a street in Lakshmi Puram near Puzhal in the afternoon.

Two domestic pets, including a Rottweiler pounced on the boy. The dog chased and bit him repeatedly. On hearing his screams, his family members rushed to rescue him, while the dog owner also rushed to the scene to control the dogs. After struggling for a couple of minutes, the boy was rescued and admitted to the private hospital in Teacher's Colony in Kolathur.

"We gave him injections

to cover tetanus and rabies, besides immunoglobulin. He has sutures for the chin and ear injuries," a duty doctor said.

Greater Chennai Corporation veterinary officer Kamal Hussain said that the dogs will be relocated to a shelter assigned by the Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board or Blue Cross on Sunday morning. "We will also check if the dogs were vaccinated and have a pet license." On May 6, a five-year-old child, Suraksha, and her mother, Sonia, 25, were attacked by two Rottweiler dogs in a Chennai Corporation park in Nungambakkam at Thousand Lights police

AICTE comes up with AI cert course to train engg faculty

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Chennai: All India Council for Technical Education, in an effort to address the shortage of faculty members in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and data science, has come up with short-term courses to train core engineering faculty members under quality improvement programmes.

After computer science engineering, AI and data science is the second most sought after course in Tamil Nadu colleges this year. However, lack of trained faculty members in emerging areas remains a concern.

For the 2024-25 academic year, adding more than 25,000 seats in emerging areas by engineering colleges in the state is also expected to worsen the situation. "AICTE's new PG certificate programme in emerging areas for faculty members in core engineering disciplines can help to overcome the shortage of faculty," said V E Annamalai, principal of SSN College of Engineering.

Faculty members from mechanical, civil, electrical and electronics departments with a minimum five years of experience can apply for programmes such as AI, data science, robotics, IoT, cyber physical systems, virtual reality, machine learning. The duration of these hybrid programmes offered by Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) is six months and they will be offered at free of cost. The last date to apply is on June 6.

From upskilling their faculty members to hiring industry experts, engineering colleges are trying various ways to teach

emerging areas. "Getting qualified faculty members to teach AI, data science is a big challenge. Upskilling also comes with a big cost as the course fee for each faculty member costs ₹2 lakh to ₹4 lakh," said R M Kishore, vice-chairman of RMK Engineering College.

Colleges have also requested Anna University to accept core engineering faculty as AI faculty after a certification programme. "While training faculty we are also trying to hire industry experts as professors of practice," said Abhay Meganathan, vice-chairman of Rajalakshmi Group of Institutions.

Those like PSG College of Technology are trying to tap their alumni strength. "Our alumni are working in many emerging areas. We also start new programmes only after making sure resources are available within a department to run them," said K Prakasan, principal of PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore.

Some principals said the issue may get worse as most computer science graduates get placed at UG level and very few opt for PG courses.

Anna University vice-chancellor R Velraj said the university will try to address shortage of faculty after considering all aspects.

Postal votes should be counted first: TNCC to Election Commission

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Congress president K Selvaperunthagai on Saturday asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure that postal votes were counted first before counting votes polled in EVMs. Speaking to reporters, Selvaperunthagai said, "There are reports that the ECI is planning to count the postal ballot votes at the end after the completion of counting of votes polled in the EVMs. The procedure is against the law as in 2021 too the postal votes were counted first in the morning and only then they went for votes polled in EVMs." Selvaperunthagai alleged that counting of postal votes at the end was part of "a larger plan" of the BJP to win in the constituencies where the winning margin is around 10,000 to 15,000 votes. TNN