

## Mamata declares 12 districts in Bengal flood-hit as death toll mounts to 83

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**Kolkata:** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday declared 12 districts in West Bengal as flood-hit and demanded adequate funds from the Centre for post-flood work, even as the death toll in it mounted to 83.



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee. PTI

The chief minister held the Damodar Valley Corporation responsible for 'abnormal' release of water from their barrages, claiming this resulted in the present situation causing a huge loss of property and loss of lives, a charge denied by the DVC.

After reviewing the flood situation at a high-level meeting with senior officials and holding a video conference with the district magistrates of all the affected districts, Banerjee told reporters that she had already requested the DVC authority to stop further release of water.

Banerjee said she has sought appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during her visit in Delhi on 11 and 12 August to discuss the situation and place her demands for flood damages from the National Disaster Relief Fund.

"I also want to raise the issue of release of water by the DVC," Banerjee said.

She said that she had lodged a complaint with Union Power Minister Piyush Goyal over DVC's 'abnormal' release of water.

"Earlier too I had written to the DVC to undertake dredging and to increase the capacity of their reservoirs, but sadly it had done nothing of the sort. We always cooperate with the DVC, but it doesn't cooperate," she alleged.

The DVC, however, on Tuesday countered the charge of excess discharge from its barrages, saying the release of water from the DVC system was not the reason for the flooding in the downstream areas.

"The flooding over the past few days is mainly due to the high tidal effects and KOMEN depression-related rainfall. The combined release on August 3 was 95,000 cusecs which is lower than the safe downstream channel carrying capacity of the Damodar river which is 1,10,000 cusecs," DVC said in a release.

The DVC said, inspite of the unprecedented heavy rainfall in Jharkhand and West Bengal over the last few days, DVC dams at Panchet and Maithon had been able to moderate the flow of water to a significant extent of 68 percent for the last two days.

Meanwhile, the flood situation in south Bengal on Tuesday improved slightly as a result of no rain, reduced discharge of water from the barrages and waning tides, Disaster Management Department sources said.

Stating that the death toll in the flood has mounted to 83, the chief minister said 4.31 lakh people have already taken shelter in 2,449 relief camps in the 12 affected districts.

Fourteen more persons died in the affected districts, taking the toll to 83, Disaster Management Department sources said, adding, incidents of lightning, wall collapse, electrocution, snake bite and drowning were to blame for the fatalities.

"Altogether 2,449 relief camps have been set up to shelter over 4.31 lakh marooned people and nearly 470 medical camps opened," a source said, adding, the total number of affected people was over 61 lakh.

The sources said that 1,07,808 houses were damaged and 3,68,238 houses destroyed partly. Crop over an area of 7,97,848 hectares has been damaged due to the floods.

Banerjee also instructed some of her cabinet colleagues to visit the affected areas and supervise relief arrangement.

She also instructed the officials to monitor the situation round-the-clock and take appropriate steps.

With no rains and waning tides, the water level has started receding from inundated areas in Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, West Midnapore, East Midnapore, South 24-Parganas, North 24-Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Bankura and Birbhum districts, state Irrigation Minister Rajib Banerjee said.

"The situation is likely to improve further if there is no more rain and fresh discharge of water from the barrages," he said.

**PTI**