



# Trail of destruction

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## **Trail of destruction-The extent of damage caused by Cyclone Gaja is much worse than what was believed earlier**

- It is now becoming clear that Cyclone Gaja is a major disaster, and its economic impact in Tamil Nadu is comparable to that of the tsunami of 2004.
- The devastation suffered by tens of thousands of people in several districts of the State has been severe, going well beyond the annual storm season losses.
- In the initial days after November 16, when the cyclone struck, the State heaved a sigh of relief since the death toll was relatively low.
- But it is now clear that the suffering, the loss, and the displacement in large parts of Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur and Pudukottai districts is of an enormous magnitude.
- The top priority for the Tamil Nadu government should be to restore administrative systems and service delivery in the affected areas.
- Only with physical access, electricity connections and public health facilities can effective relief work be undertaken.
- It is equally important to assure the large number of stricken farmers that there will be a moratorium on any agricultural loans that they have taken, while a fair compensation scheme is prepared.
- The Tamil Nadu government has given the Centre a memorandum seeking nearly Rs.15,000 crore for restoration, rehabilitation and mitigation, besides Rs.1,431 crore for immediate relief work.
- The State's requirements should be met in full.
- Cyclone Gaja has wrought terrible devastation, and the relief programme must match it in scale.

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