

# Together, towards a safer India

Newsletter of the Ministry of Home Affairs  
National Disaster Management Division, Ministry of Home Affairs  
Edition 14 – November-December, 2004

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## *Inauguration of National Seminar on “Mainstreaming Disaster Management into Volunteerism - The Role of National Service Scheme (NSS)” by Shri Sunil Dutt, Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports*

The National Disaster Management Framework drawn up by the Ministry of Home Affairs envisages association of youth organizations in the entire gamut of activities in the field of disaster management with a special focus on building the knowledge, aptitude and skills of the communities in holistic disaster management including disaster response. In pursuance thereto, interactions were held with the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports for securing involvement of youth organizations viz. the National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) in disaster management activities with an objective to include DM component in their training/orientation programmes as well as in their regular activities targeted at the communities.

In order to develop a concerted action plan in this regard, a National Seminar on “Mainstreaming Disaster Management into Volunteerism - The Role of National Service Scheme” was organized in Pune on 18-19 November, 2004. The Seminar was inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Sunil Dutt.



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Hon'ble Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Sunil Dutt gave a call for harnessing the massive youth power to work with dedication and commitment for reducing the vulnerabilities of communities to different disasters. Espousing the qualities of a volunteer, Hon'ble Minister said that (s)he should be a humanist with the welfare of society at heart and the service should be rendered selflessly and not with monetary consideration. Referring to numerous natural and man-made disasters impacting millions at an unflinching regularity, he said that the initiative to involve youth organizations especially the National Service Scheme (NSS) in disaster management endeavors was laudable.

Smt. Vandana Jena, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports stressed the importance of the subject as disasters have assumed immense proportions and are visiting more and more areas and afflicting greater number of people. It was hence important that the people are prepared to face disaster situations. The NSS was well-placed to work with the communities in the field of disaster management as it has a dedicated volunteer strength of over 2.2 million volunteers and they have close association and linkage with the communities.

The deliberations in the Seminar were spread over a period of two days with many eminent experts and specialists making presentations on different facets of disaster management including introduction to natural hazards, vulnerability and risk profile of the country, the National

DM Framework and the Initiatives, institutionalizing awareness generation, the Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) and mitigation in the functioning of NSS. The participants were sub-divided into three separate groups to delineate the strategy and an Action Plan for integrating DM in the activities and programmes of NSS. After intense deliberations and interactions, an Action Plan with the following major components was drawn up and has also been endorsed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for institutionalization of Disaster Management as a cross cutting service area within existing thrust areas of NSS:-

- a) study and assess the hazard profile of a particular geographical region and the communities and identify their felt needs.
- b) build/enhance the capacity and capability of the communities to withstand and manage disasters to ensure optimization of external assistance for disaster risk management.
- c) generate awareness among the communities and build an attitude of integrating proactive preventive, mitigative and preparatory measures to increase the resilience of the communities to face disasters and minimize loss of lives and livelihoods.
- d) facilitate development of multi-hazard Disaster Management Plans which constitute a vital component of disaster risk reduction process.

- e) identify and train youth volunteers and task force members drawn from the community in different aspects of disaster management.
- f) facilitate constitution and training of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) and Disaster Management Teams (DMTs) at different levels.
- g) facilitate conduct of mock-drills for improved disaster management response.
- h) usher into a higher state of disaster readiness in schools and colleges through effective implementation of School Safety and Awareness Programme since an overwhelming majority of the youth volunteers are drawn from schools and colleges.
- i) improve the capabilities of youth organizations and the communities for mounting a more effective and speedier disaster response.

In pursuance thereto, the Action Plan has been approved by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The State Governments have also been advised to associate NSS with the DM activities in their respective areas and the State focal points of NSS may be co-opted as members of the State Disaster Management Committees and the District Disaster Management Committees. Necessary steps for sensitization and training of NSS nodal officers are also proposed to be undertaken shortly.

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## **Inter-Ministerial Meeting to finalize inputs and strategy for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR)**

Secretary (Border Management), Ministry of Home Affairs convened an Inter-Ministerial meeting to discuss the development of inputs on various issues likely to be raised and discussed in the WCDR. The meeting was attended by officers from different Ministries / Departments of Government of India and they submitted their comments/view-points on the subjects concerning their respective Ministries. On the basis of the comments received from different Ministries/ Departments, the consolidated views/comments were prepared and sent to the Permanent Mission of India in Geneva for raising the concerns and issues of intimate interest to India at the drafting meetings for the WCDR as well as during the course of negotiations for finalization of the Outcome Document.

The composition of the Indian delegation to participate in the WCDR has also been approved by Hon'ble Home Minister. The delegation would be led by Shri A.K. Rastogi, Secretary (BM), Ministry of Home Affairs and would comprise of an Officer from MHA, the State Government of Orissa and the Central Industrial Security Force and a Professor from IIT, Roorkee to represent India at various thematic discussions at the WCDR. The WCDR comprises of three segments viz. the Inter-Governmental segment including the High-level Round Tables, the Thematic Segments and the Public Forum. In addition, it also affords space for the Regional Fora.

The discussions at the Inter-Governmental Segment and the High-level Round Tables will inform the outcome of the deliberations at the WCDR and would be reflected in the Outcome Document. However, the Thematic Segments are crucial from the point of view of show-casing India's achievements and successes in putting in place an appropriate institutional, policy and legal framework for DM; risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning; knowledge management, innovation and education for building a culture of safety and resilience; reducing the underlying risk factors for minimization of vulnerabilities and preparedness for effective response. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) is going to be a watershed event at the international level and is likely to significantly influence and determine the course of thinking, strategization and action for the ensuing decade or two. India needs to position itself prominently to take full advantage from the scheme of things likely to emerge in the aftermath of the WCDR, more so when our multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approach for a comprehensive assault on our vulnerabilities and strengthening of response capabilities is being recognized as a pioneering initiative addressing an entire range of issues viz. disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

## **Development of an awareness generation campaign through DAVP and AIR**

The National Disaster Management Framework envisages designing and developing an awareness generation

campaign for building the knowledge, attitude and skills for effective disaster management and mandates use of audio, audio-visual and print media for dissemination of messages/slogans. In pursuance thereto and as per the strategy evolved in consultation with various experts by the National Steering Committee for Mass Media Campaign, designs and templates have been developed for dissemination through the Department of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP). It is proposed to use the Bus Back Panels and Wall Paintings in seismically active EQ zones viz. zones IV and V for conveying messages on earthquake safety. Similarly, audio messages for broadcast over the All India Radio (AIR) have been developed and are in the process of finalization for broadcast over the AIR network. Simultaneously, the process of development of spots for telecast over Doordarshan has also been initiated. The awareness generation campaigns through these mediums are being taken up as part of an innovative approach emanating from the premise that 'an aware community is a secure community' and it is proposed to upscale the campaign in the forthcoming financial year with higher outlays and with much wider coverage.

## **Sensitization of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Officers in disaster management**

The Reserve Bank Staff College organized a four-day training programme for its Officers in Chennai and a one-day capsule on DM was also included therein. On a request received from the RBI, a resource

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person was deputed from under the GoI-UNDP DRM Programme to sensitize the participating Officers from different regional and state offices of the RBI on the national disaster management framework and initiatives launched by the Government of India for comprehensive and holistic disaster management. They were apprised of the process involved in development of on-site and off-site DM plans and the need to conduct mock-drills at regular intervals to enhance the preparedness levels of their staff to meet the challenge thrown up by natural as well as man-made disasters. The presentations were followed by an interactive session wherein the participants raised their queries for elucidation of disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures.

## **Partnership with Builders' Association of India and the Construction Federation of India for wider dissemination of DM agenda**

The Builders' Association of India (BAI) and the Construction Federation of India (CFI) are two of the largest organizations of construction companies/contractors/construction consultants with a large and extensive membership base of construction companies and contractors who undertake construction of public infrastructure like roads, bridges, commercial complexes, housing societies, turn-key projects etc. They have their regional and state chapters

in various cities in India and their members have been in the forefront of national efforts at reconstruction and rehabilitation of earthquake affected people in Gujarat in the aftermath of Bhuj Earthquake.

The Ministry of Home Affairs have had interaction with office-bearers of both the organizations for associating and involving them in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities with a special focus on the construction sector, the objective being to sensitize, train and build an attitude of disaster-resistant construction techniques. The Ministry would also assist in training their members and construction personnel in safer construction techniques. They would work in collaboration with MHA to spread awareness about the need to adopt and integrate safe construction practices to usher in a safe-built environment.

## **CII sensitization programme in Agartala**

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) organized a sensitization programme in Agartala, Tripura in association with Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Tripura and UNDP to sensitize the industrial and business community in implementing and adopting disaster-resistant construction techniques in view of the high vulnerability profile of the North-eastern region. The programme was inaugurated by the Minister of Revenue, Government of Tripura and the Commissioner, Revenue presided over the session. The Minister lauded the efforts of the CII and MHA in sensitizing the people at

large especially the business community for safer construction and production processes. The Commissioner, Revenue assured that the Government was in the process of setting-up a DM authority, enacting a DM legislation and adopting a DM policy and would work in close coordination for implementation of disaster risk reduction agenda to ensure safety of people, their property, livelihoods and the socio-economic infrastructure.

The presentations focused on the vulnerability profile of NE region with reference to Tripura; the EQ hazard and the structural and non-structural mitigation measures; the national initiatives in DM by the GoI; the fire, chemical and flood hazards etc. and were followed by an interactive session. The event was well covered in the local press. Nearly 60 representatives of industry, commercial organizations, NGOs and other civil society organizations participated in the programme.

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