

Together, towards a safer India

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Post-Tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

A severe earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia had triggered a massive tsunami causing widespread destruction and devastation in the coastal areas especially the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The maximum damage was caused to life and property in the southern Nicobar Islands. About ten thousand houses were fully damaged and more than 3,500 persons lost their lives. Destruction of infrastructure and communication network further hampered rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The Government of India adopted a three-pronged strategy to deal with the catastrophic proportions of the tragedy. In the first phase, focus was on provision of immediate relief and rescue. In the second phase, construction of intermediate shelters and restoration of livelihood was undertaken. In the third phase, a concerted effort is being made to secure permanent rehabilitation of the affected populace.

Despite odds, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Administration moved more than fifteen thousand tones of construction materials to the different and far-flung islands and about five thousand officials were deputed for relief and reconstruction work. The Central Government assisted the A&N Administration in mobilizing men and materials from different parts of the country. Construction of ten thousand intermediate housing units by 15th April, 2005 before the onset of monsoon with mobilization of suitable construction materials was a daunting task, accomplished with due assistance from the local administration and the common people. Since most of the relief camps were set up in tented accommodation, it was essential that intermediate shelters were provided to the affected people before the onset of monsoon.

Design and specifications of intermediate shelters were finalized by an expert team sent to A&N Islands under Prof. A.S. Arya, National Seismic Advisor in consultation with the Administration and the beneficiaries and tribal councils. The key parameters being :-

- i. Use of light building materials easy to transport and acceptable to affected families.
- ii. Unit should withstand earthquake, cyclonic winds and monsoon and have a lifespan of at least 24 months.
- iii. Three type designs comprising of a single unit of 23 sq. mtr. for a single family; 89.2 sq. mtr. for a joint family and 35.8 sq. mtr. for Nancowry group of islands were finalized.
- iv. Location of units to be at a higher ground away from the shore.

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- v. Roofing and walling with CGI sheets, frame of steel or wooden posts, raised compacted earthen flooring, common kitchen, bath and toilet facilities, provision of CFL lights, fans, doors and windows are some of the features of the finalized designs.
- vi. Provision of social infrastructure such as primary school, community center, primary health center, balwadi etc. was kept as per the need of each site.

The total material requirement was worked out to be 6500 MT of CGI sheets and 8000 MT of structural steel and non-structural items. These were mobilized through various State Governments. Construction machinery and building artisans were mobilized from Chennai, Kolkata and Vizag and NGOs were permitted to participate in the construction process in non-tribal areas although the materials were supplied by the Administration.

Despite constant tremors and aftershocks, shortage of skilled labour, logistic constraints in transportation etc., all the 9,572 intermediate shelters have been completed and people have shifted to them. The next phase of constructing multi-hazard proof permanent dwelling units and reconstructing damaged infrastructure is being initiated shortly. The permanent houses would be constructed by the Ministry of Urban Development with proper town planning and civic amenities.

The Core Group set up in the Planning Commission has finalized its report with a recommended financial outlay of Rs.9,870.25 crore and has made State-wise allocations with Rs. 2614.22 crore being earmarked for A&N Islands. The Core Group has opined that 34% of the outlay be used on housing and social infrastructure and 38% on infrastructure restoration. It is proposed to complete implementation of rehabilitation/reconstruction by March, 2008.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) integrates DM in training programmes for officers

RBI included Disaster Management in a week-long safety programme for bankers in Chennai, with an overview of Disaster Management scenario, the vulnerability profile, the initiatives launched for holistic disaster management, the response capabilities etc. Security Officers and officers from the Engineering Wing of RBI and public and private sector banks participated. The presentations were followed by an interactive session.

“Lessons Learnt & Experience Sharing Workshop” under GoI-UNDP DRM Programme on 16-17 April, 2005 at Surajkund (Faridabad)

A two-day workshop was organized on 16-17th April, 2005 on “Lessons Learnt and Experience Sharing under the DRM Programme”. The State Project Officers/city nodal officers/project staff involved in the implementation of the disaster risk management initiatives under the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme, officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the faculty from the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) participated in the Workshop in addition to the Team Leaders, state and district level Project Officers and Project Coordinators. The Workshop also had participation from some of the Secretaries, Disaster Management/Relief Commissioners and District Magistrates/District Collectors from some districts. The objective of the workshop was to bring together the project staff based in different parts of the country to share their ideas, experiences and resources and the lessons learnt highlighting the implementation methods, strategies, processes, best practices etc. developed under the Programme.

The workshop also had participation from resource persons drawn from the various resource institutions of repute to sensitize participants on different aspects of disaster management.

The Workshop was intended to be a mid-term review/stock-taking exercise of the achievements and experiences gained during implementation of the disaster risk management agenda and the road ahead.



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Constitution of Hazard Safety Cells (HSC) in States/ UTs

The Ministry of Home Affairs had advised the States and UTs to constitute Hazard Safety Cells (HSC) headed by the Chief Engineer, PWD to establish mechanism for proper implementation of and compliance with building codes, safe construction practices, creation of a framework to conduct certification courses/mandatory registration of engineers and architects, review of building by-laws and to ensure safety of buildings and structures against hazards. The HSCs would also be responsible for design review of all Government buildings and act as advisory cells to the State Government on different aspects of building safety and for retrofitting of the lifeline buildings. The Cells would scrutinize the Type Plans and will also audit the construction with a view to ensuring that earthquake safety measures have been incorporated.

The States/UTs of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Pondicherry, West Bengal, Chattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have already constituted Hazard Safety Cells and the training of engineers of these Cells is commencing from 20th June onwards at CPWD National Training Center, Ghaziabad.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) initiative towards fire safety in industrial installations and high-rise buildings

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) organized a sensitization-cum-training programme on "Fire Hazard in High-rise Buildings and Industrial Establishments" on 11th April, 2005 in New Delhi in association with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme. The Technical input for the programme was provided by the Delhi Fire Services which also organized a mock-drill.



The focus on fire hazard was necessitated due to a large number of life threatening fire incidents in industries and in high-rise buildings highlighting a lack of inherent fire fighting capability in these units.

Shri A.K. Kaul, Chairman, CII Delhi State Council put into focus the endeavors of CII to ensure a safer industrial environment and encapsulated the initiatives in the field of disaster management.

Shri R.C. Sharma, Chief Fire Officer, Delhi Fire Service, gave an overview of the 'Fire Hazard, Lessons Learnt and Mitigation Measures for High-rise Buildings and Industrial Establishments in Delhi' and said that Delhi had over 4,000 high-rise buildings without proper fire fighting measures and means of escape. He urged industrial establishments to understand the nature of hazardous raw materials used and take appropriate precautionary measures. He opined that every high-rise building and industry must have fire/smoke/heat alarm systems; first-aid fire fighting appliances; overhead or underground water tanks; standby generators; unobstructed staircase; a public address system to inform the occupants in case of a fire incident; smoke management and ventilation; a DG set for back-up power supply; a sprinkler system to be kept operational at all the times and a round-the-clock control room integrated into the security system. In addition, in-built means of escape and fire safety measures must be provided for.

Shri S.K. Jha, State Project Officer, Delhi spoke on the "Vulnerability Profile of Delhi" enumerating the circumstances enhancing the vulnerability scenario in Delhi in terms of earthquakes as well as fires. Shri Anup Karanth, Project Officer, UEVRP spoke on "Earthquake induced Fire Hazards". He said that this risk has received inadequate attention so far despite the fact that the probability remained high especially in unplanned urban areas and aging infrastructure; in industrial establishments and becomes sharper in areas with a mixed location of residential and industrial units. The primary effects of earthquakes include building collapse or utility malfunction which can lead to short-circuit or chemical spill in an industrial establishment triggering a fire hazard.

The presentations were followed by an interactive discussion session and a demonstration of the capability of Delhi Fire Service to fight fire in high-rise buildings and industrial establishments. The HAZMAT van and its ability to combat chemical fires was also explained to the participants.

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Initiative by Government of Tamil Nadu towards fire safety in educational institutions

Government of Tamil Nadu has launched an initiative to enhance preparedness in educational institutions in the State through Department of Education and Tamil Nadu Fire & Rescue Services (TNF&RS) Department and has asked them to conduct mock-drills in schools and colleges in the light of the Kumbakonam Fire Tragedy. The Directors of both the Departments have been advised to form a working group to monitor the progress. The TNF&RS Department is training Physical Education teachers on fire and other disasters in their Advanced Training Institute and about 150 teachers have been trained in a 10-day module and would be utilized as master-trainers for subsequent trainings. Schools have been advised to keep six buckets of sand and water ready at all times.

The subject of Disaster Management has also been included in the VIIIth standard in State Board schools and as a Chapter in the first year of Arts in Environmental Education.

Dhanbad initiates School Safety and Awareness Programme

In the City Disaster Management Committee meeting held on 26th April, 2005 at Dhanbad under the District Magistrate, Dr. Beela Rajesh, it was decided to organize mock-drills and prepare the School Disaster Management Plans for all schools in Dhanbad district. The District Administration has also advised all the schools to develop their School Safety Plans and conduct mock-drills, Drop-Cover-Hold and Stop-Cover-Roll drills for ushering into better school preparedness. A formal order in this regard is being issued to all the schools and focused attention is being given to developing the skills of teachers and students for earthquake and fire safety and School Headmasters and Monitors are also being oriented in this regard. The Administration has fixed 30th June, 2005 as the deadline for completing the School DM Plans to be followed by district-level coordination meetings.

Updates on GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme and Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Project

- **GUJARAT:** Bharuch District Administration is training a group of volunteers in each ward in the city in emergency search and rescue and first-aid to respond to a crisis situation. A data bank of trained

volunteers is also being maintained. A mock-drill was organized in Bhavnagar by Bhavnagar Fire Brigade Department in collaboration with Excel Industries, which also undertook to train members of the Disaster Management Teams (DMTs). In Bharuch district, two mock drills, one on fire and another on flood, were organized by District Administration as part of State level exercise on 29th April 2005 involving the industries, village and neighbourhood communities, NGOs, Red cross, Civil defence and Home guard volunteers.

- **MAHARASHTRA:** A high level meeting to assess the pre-monsoon preparedness was held on 26th April, 2005 under the Chairmanship of Addl. Chief Secretary (Home), Maharashtra attended by different line departments who were asked to prepare contingency plans to prevent water logging and spread of diseases, ensure effective drainage and coordination. Pune Municipal Corporation has issued a 'Tharaav' (resolution) on constitution of Pune City Disaster Management Committee. The resolution exemplifies a long-term commitment towards disaster management at the city level.
- **ASSAM:** A mock-drill was held at Agomoni H.S. School, Dhubri Distt., Assam with the help of CRPF, Home Guard, Fire Brigade & Health Deptt. School children participated in the drill with enthusiasm.



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