

Together, towards a safer India

Monthly Newsletter of the Ministry of Home Affairs
(National Disaster Management Division) Government of India
Edition 7 - March 2004

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Inauguration of World Congress on Natural Disaster Mitigation by Hon'ble Prime Minister – Government to set-up a Disaster Mitigation Fund

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee inaugurated the World Congress on Natural Disaster Mitigation, organized by The Institution of Engineers (India) under the aegis of World Federation of Engineering Organizations with the support of the Ministries of Home Affairs, Urban Development, Rural Development, Railways and the Planning Commission on 19th February, 2004 at the Vigyan Bhawan.



Inaugurating the Congress, the Prime Minister said that the history of mankind is in many ways the history of man's struggle against natural calamities and planning for disasters must take into account the natural instinct of people to assist the affected areas and populace and the participation of people must be ensured in all aspects of disaster management. He appealed to the nations to share the knowledge and expertise garnered by them since disaster management was one field in which there should not be any barriers to international cooperation, as evidenced by the overwhelming response to the earthquakes in Bhuj in 2001 and Bam (Iran) in December, 2003.

Referring to the organic link between disaster mitigation and human development, the Prime Minister said that the overarching goal of halving poverty, improving educational and health status of poor can be realized only if the poor are spared the ravages of natural disasters. It is with this aim in view that Government of India is systematically working to reduce disaster risk

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by adopting modes of development which lead to sustainable development through disaster risk reduction. The Government has stipulated disaster mitigation to be an important component of national development process since it is felt that flawed, inappropriate and unbalanced development is in itself responsible for contributing to disaster risk. To achieve this objective, the Government has formulated the National Earthquake Mitigation Project and National Cyclone Mitigation Project and has also recommended to the 12th Finance Commission to create a Disaster Mitigation Fund of Rupees 5,000 crore.

Hon'ble Prime Minister also referred to the vital role played by the Engineers in disaster risk reduction and urged them to help build a safe built environment by well-designed and properly constructed structures with quality materials which could withstand the earthquake with minimum loss and hoped that the deliberations in the Congress would contribute to enlarging the range of engineering solutions to risk reduction.

During the course of the deliberations over a period of three days, a number of sessions were held on various facets of disaster mitigation and management viz. Natural Disasters-Global Dimensions and Impact on Development; Capacity Building and Financing for Disaster Mitigation; Engineering for Natural Disaster Mitigation and the Lessons from Major Disasters. The Plenary sessions on these subjects were followed by thematic presentations on different topics.

Delivering the Valedictory Address on the conclusion of the World Congress

on 22nd February, 2004, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Shri L.K. Advani referred to the visible shift in Government's approach to disaster management with mitigation being made multi-disciplinary spanning across all sectors of development.

Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the need to build safe housing stock in urban as well as rural areas since it is not earthquakes or cyclones but the collapse of buildings during these calamities which result in massive loss of lives. It is in this context that the Engineers and Architects have to play a key role by ensuring incorporation of disaster-resistant features in fresh constructions through rigorous enforcement of building bye-laws. The Deputy Prime Minister felt that the Engineers and Architects have a social responsibility to discharge and he hoped that they would not be found wanting in their efforts to achieve this objective.

Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister said that the Government has taken the first few but significant steps towards vulnerability reduction and is steadily moving towards the goal of sustainable development for building a safer and secure India. He hoped that the World Congress would come up with concrete recommendations and action plan for natural disaster mitigation.

The World Congress was attended by nearly 700 delegates from Asia, Africa, America, Europe and the Pacific drawn from a spectrum of organizations and in all 104 Papers were presented in the Congress. The outcome of the deliberations was the NEW DELHI DECLARATION comprising separate segments on Policy and Planning Issues; Financing and Insurance; Risk/damage Assessment and Retrofit Index; Technology Intervention; Knowledge Network; GIS, IT and Micro Zonation and Bye-laws and their Enforcement.



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Ministry of Home Affairs-Confederation of Indian Industry evolve a joint Work Plan

In a meeting between the Joint Secretary (DM), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Deputy Director General, CII, a joint Work Plan for association of corporate sector in disaster management was evolved. The Confederation of Indian Industry would take the initiative to involve its nearly 5,000 member industries in disaster management activities including awareness generation, training of personnel of industries in disaster management activities and a training module to be developed and the trained manpower to be linked to the local district administration, industries to conduct mock-drills on natural and industrial disasters (accidents) in tandem with the District Administration. Such mock-drills are to be conducted especially in chemical, mining and pharmaceutical industry, development of on-site and off-site disaster management plans, resources and equipments available with the industry to be uploaded into the India Disaster Resource Network (IDRN) for access by Administration in any eventuality and CII and its local chapters to organize Sensitization Sessions for industries in disaster mitigation and management in association with MHA and the concerned State Government.

The action points listed in the Work Plan are being implemented across the country.

Launch of Disaster Management Helpline by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai has earned the unique

distinction of being the first municipality to launch a telephone helpline for information on disaster management. The Helpline, with the three-digit number 108, was inaugurated by the Mayor, Mumbai. The objective of the Helpline is to provide a single point interface for reporting disasters and to mobilize a coordinated and speedy response by various agencies to meet any emergency situation. Awareness generation campaign for popularizing the Helpline has also been initiated.

Visit of a Vietnamese delegation to study Disaster Management systems and structures in India

A delegation from Vietnam led by Mr. Bui Nguyen Hong, Deputy Director of Dike Management, Flood and Storm Control, Vietnam and comprising officials from Departments of Agriculture, Rural, Defense, Science & Technology, Hydro-Meteorological, Interior, Planning and Investment etc. paid a visit to India from 1st to 5th February, 2004 to study the systems and structures for Disaster Management in India. Apart from interacting with the officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs and visit to the Control Room, the delegation visited the Indian Meteorological Department, the National Institute of Disaster Management, the Confederation of Indian Industry and other institutions to learn about disaster management and mitigation initiatives in India.

Signing of MoU with the Government of Uttar Pradesh for implementation of GoI-UNDP DRM Programme

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of UP and UNDP for implementation of

the DRM Programme in the State. The Relief Commissioner, UP signed the MoU on behalf of the State. The activities are being initiated with identification of human resource support to the State for implementation of programme at state and district levels.

PROGRESS OF WORK UNDER GoI-UNDP DRM PROJECT

UTTARANCHAL: A two-day workshop was organized by District Disaster Management Committee, Rudraprayag on the role of PRIs in disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. The Zilla Panchayat chairperson, district officials and 35 members from Zilla Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat etc. participated in it. The workshop focused on the role PRIs could play in awareness generation and training. This was followed by training of PRI members at three blocks of Rudraprayag in which more than 150 members participated.

GUJARAT: A two-day workshop was organized with 'Save the Children' organization on 'Addressing Children's Issues in Emergencies' in Ahmedabad with an objective to understand the specific vulnerability of children in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, to respond to their special needs and to evolve suitable recommendations.

On 5th and 6th February, disaster management orientation and first aid training for Home Guards was held at Sasam in Junagadh district. On 16th and 17th February, an orientation workshop was held in Kutch for Block Resource Centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) of the Gujarat Council of Primary Education Programme (DPEP/SSA) with participation from BRC and CRC coordinators from Bhuj, Nakhatrana,

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Lakhpat, Mandavi, Mundra talukas etc. On 13th February, Indian Gas organized a mock-drill in villages through which their gas pipelines pass and shared emergency response plans. A Health Mela was organized in Talaja taluka in Bhavnagar in which village DMT members volunteered to explain hazard specific safety tips to people.

WEST BENGAL: A one-day orientation of District Nodal Officers and NGOs on Disaster Risk Management Programme and their roles and responsibilities was organized in ATI, Kolkata. Twenty participants including ADM (Relief) and other officers attended it.

Indian Institute of Architects (IIA), Bengal chapter organized a talk on disaster management with special reference to earthquake resistant hospitals in which over 60 Architects participated.

A three-day training programme was organized in Orissa including field visit for the District Project Officers from Cooch Bihar, Nadia and 24 Parghanas from 16th to 18th February. The DPOs discussed their work plan and implementation strategy.

A five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) was organized from 23rd to 27th February at ATI, Kolkata with 45 participants from ten districts along with members from Red Cross, Civil Defense etc. The participants were also given hands on training on preparation of Village Disaster Management Plans.

ORISSA: A Training of Engineers on Rapid Visual Screening of Buildings was held in OSDMA on 3rd Feb. and Prof. A.S. Arya, Capacity Building Advisor, MHA was invited to impart the training to a team of 37 Engineers and Architects from various departments. The basic aim was to

train them so that they will be the resource persons for their own departments to identify the buildings which need to be retrofitted or strengthened.

DELHI: The Deputy Commissioner, North District organized a Health Mela from 13th to 15th February in which an Information Facilitation and Dissemination Stall was put up and handouts in Hindi on earthquake and fire hazard were distributed along with interaction with the community to increase awareness about natural hazards.

Central Board of Secondary Education

A two-day training programme was organized by CBSE for the teachers from various schools of West Bengal on 12-13 February at Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Kolkata in which 86 teachers participated. They were informed about various natural phenomena, the Community Based Disaster Management with special emphasis on children's role in preparedness.

A mock evacuation drill was held in Presentation Convent School, Delhi without the students or teachers being informed about it. More than 700 students, teachers and support staff evacuated two multi-storey buildings in less than four minutes in an orderly manner

The school has installed a special siren which they use without announcement on any one day in a month. CBSE is contemplating a sensitization/training of physical education teachers to initiate these drills in their schools.

In Aizawl, Mizoram Lalfak Senior Secondary School, Venghlui announced its admissions to Class VIII & above with advertisements

highlighting introduction of a course on Disaster Management.

Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Project

JALLANDHAR: A panel discussion was organized on Punjab Doordarshan under the program 'Baithak' on 13th February for generating awareness on earthquakes and local Cable Networks have also started telecasting movies on earthquake. On 29th February, First Community Meeting with RWAs was taken by ADC, Jalandhar to sensitize them about disaster preparedness.

DEHRADUN: Government Polytechnic College conducted an Earthquake Awareness Program with participation of 40 Civil Engineering students.

DELHI: Earthquake sensitization meetings were held in North East and East districts with RWAs and line departments as well as for civil defence volunteers of West district.

UTTAR PRADESH: Housing Deptt. interacted with Press to create awareness about EQ and safe construction practices and the role of Press in disseminating information to the community.

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