

DISASTER AND ITS MANAGEMENT MACHINERY IN INDIA

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Abstract

In the present epoch, the loudness of natural calamities has multiplied. Reacting to it, government of India has attempted many measures to pacify the intensity of disaster. Although the efficacy of civil administration often lag behind to tackle the catastrophe, emergency call is given to the armed forces to assist in the rescue process. The armed forces also accept the challenge in a prompt manner to save the property and life of people. Thus it is inevitable for the armed forces to be well trained in disaster management field to deal with the catastrophe of various types.

Keywords- [Disaster Management, Rehabilitation, Cataclysm, Hailstorm, Armed force]

Introduction

Disaster Management Act, 2005, defines disaster as a calamity, catastrophe, detrimental damage, mishap and a grievous occurrence, which is beyond the controlling potentiality of the victims. Disaster management, a body of institution is regarded to formulation and implementation of policies to bring down the jeopardy associated with cataclysm (Disaster Management Act: 2005). Even so, the geographical location of India is not in a conducive zone where 55 percent of Indian landmass is in earthquake prone area; 68 percent of area is endangered with drought and starvation; 12 percent is vulnerable to floods; and 8 percent is measurable part of cyclones excluding the hailstorm and heat wave (Public Policy towards Natural Disasters in India: 2011). In the yesteryear, when cataclysm hit any part of India, out of responsibility and obligation the department of relief and rehabilitation under the ministry of agriculture, was given the full mandate to provide emergency facility to the affected community (Government of India: 2011). Notwithstanding, with the establishment of disaster management act of 2005, there is a remarkable change in the relief and rehabilitation process to mitigate the intensity. In a view of it, the United Nations declared 1990s as the 'international disaster for natural disaster reduction'.

Disasters as threat to National Security

The prevalence of disaster either by natural or man-made is escalating and may create a havoc in near future. Natural disasters are primarily natural events. It is possible that certain human activities could maybe aid in some of these events, but, by and large, these are mostly natural events like earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, typhoons, tornadoes etc. But man-made are mostly caused due to certain human activities. The disasters themselves could be unintentional, but, are caused due to some intentional activity. Most of these are due to certain accidents which could have been prevented if sufficient precautionary measures were put in place. In accordance with harsh and extreme weather conditions, disasters like earthquake and land slide have been a grave detriment along with floods and droughts, the situation is worsened in addition with adverse impact of climate change. Being a tender part of globe, India some extent has experienced toughest industrial and infrastructural disastrous in previous time. Some historical noteworthy accidents are Bhopal gas leak disaster caused by leakage of methyl isocyanides in December 1984 leaving many casualties and hundreds of injuries (Sriramachari: 2004). The beginning of the 21st century is memorable for its black history including the Bhuj earthquake in 2001; the 2004 tsunami; earthquake in Kashmir in 2005;

unprecedented rainfall in Mumbai in 2006 where nearly 1 m rain fell in a single day; the most fatal 2008 Bihar Kosi flood; the August 2010 cloud burst in Leh; and, most recently, June 2013 landslide in Uttarakhand where hundreds of thousands lost their life and the occurrence of massive destruction resulted a deserted place¹.

National Disaster Management Act, 2005

Following the united nation direction, a permanent DM cell was organised under the control of ministry of agriculture. In a view to surveillance, the current function of the disaster management apparatus, a high powered committee was set up in 1999, and recommended to empower these institutions at national, state and district level. Finally, the committee submitted its report in 2002, on the basis of which the DM act was formulated in 2005. Furthermore, there is provision for settlement of disaster management authority and formulation of plan at the national, state and district level and preparation of a national policy for disaster management. Realizing on the proposal, the national policy on disaster management was materialized in 2009. The policy intent to develop an incorporate, multi-disaster oriented and advanced technologically driven disaster management for prevention, preparation and mitigation. It also delineates technological, financial and institutional arrangements for disaster management and complete preparation for relief, rehabilitation, extradition and recovery apparatus (Government of India: 2011).

National Disaster Response Fund and State Disaster Response Fund

According to the recommendation of thirteenth finance commission, the institution of NDRF and SDRF were set to function for a tenure of five years from 2012-2015. The funds of both schemes are to discharge money only on emergency basis of flood, drought, cyclone, land slide, earthquake, hailstorm and fire etc. In addition, national calamity contingency fund was mingle with NDRF and the calamity contingency was merged with SDRF. The 13th Finance Commission approved the annual contingency distribution to the SDRF and categorically acknowledged that the central government was to contribute 75% of total yearly allocation to general category states and 90% of total yearly allocation to special status states in the form of non-plan grant (Ghose: 2013). All significant measures regarding disaster management are decided by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs who is the fulcrum of this mandate. Under the ministry, the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC), headed by the Cabinet Secretary, keep a constant vigilant over disaster concerned issues in the country (National Disaster Management Authority: 2011). NCMC is primarily a decision making body and assign order to crisis management group (CMG) which genuinely deals with relief and rehabilitation work in all kind of major disaster (National Disaster Management Authority: 2009).

Disaster Preparedness in India

The awareness and preparedness to tackle the natural disaster in India especially at the centre and the state level is not satisfactory and requires to strengthen this management. Though there are several initiatives have been taken concerning disaster management like rehabilitation, prevention, mitigation and recovery but all these are of recent innovation. Significantly, the prevalence of frequent cataclysm in majority part of India propelled the states to constitute a disaster management mechanism at the state level to despatch quick relief to the affected area. Although the Ministry of Home Affairs is the cornerstone to

regulate all the management at the mean time but it is the armed forces under the defence ministry who really plunge into the spot to control and rescue the people. Generally, they are trained for this purpose which they assume it as a crucial mandate to assist civil authorities at the calamities.

Looking at the strong catastrophe hitting India in near past, it is clearly presumable that civil administration is inadequate to deal with the problem. So, in order to handle these vociferous situations, armed forces are the captive option. Indian forces are one of the best forces in the world due to their dedication, determination, modernization and professionalization. They are always ready to undertake with full efficiently. Moreover they are technically competent, trained manpower always ready to immediate undertake any kind of disaster related relief and rescue operation (Shivananda: 2011). The role played by the armed forces are honestly commendable, Whether it is the Kashmir earthquake of 2005, the Burrabazar fire in Kolkata on January 12, 2008, the occurrence of serial blasts at Bangalore and Ahmedabad in July 2008, or the Mumbai attack of November 26, 2008. Remarkably, when the flash flood occur in Leh the capital of Ladakh in August 2010, which left 103 casualties and 370 injuries, the Indian armed forces could manage to bring the vulnerable condition down (Flash floods in Leh Leave 103 dead, 370 Injured: 2010).

National level

The response of central government to any disaster is determined by certain factors like:

- (i) The intensity of a natural disaster;
- (ii) The level of relief operation necessary;

The Contingency Action Plan (CAP) recognizes the initiatives demand to be taken by respective Central Ministries and Public Departments. It fix the procedures and determines the key points in the administrative machinery to alleviate launching of relief and rescue operations without delay. Among the executive offices the Ministry of Home Affairs is the focal Ministry for coordination of relief and overall natural disaster management, and the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation is the nodal Ministry for drought management (National disaster Management division: 2004). But other Ministries are conferred the charges to buttress in the operation in emergency cases. The establishment of a National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is being pondered by the Ministry of Home Affairs as the supreme structure within the government for the function.

State level

The role of the Central Government is noteworthy in supporting the supplementation of manual and financial resources. Correspondent to the mechanism of central government, there is also disaster management machinery in the state level. The Chief Secretary of State leads a state level committee which takes an overall charge of the relief operations in the State. The Relief Commissioners who are in charge of the relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural disasters in their States function under the overall direction and control of the state level committee (National disaster Management division: 2004). In many states, Secretary, Department of Revenue, is too in-charge of rescue operation. State Governments usually have relief manuals and the districts have their contingency plan which is updated from time to time.

District level

In a decentralised society, the district administration is the central point to implement all governmental policies. The daily function at the district level is exercised by the district

magistrate officer or deputy commissioner who mainly coordinates and supervises all departments all over the district. Though it's not a common phenomenon but there are district level relief committee consisting of officials and non-officials (National disaster Management division: 2004). The local can only be effective to aware the people regarding the disaster, preparedness, prevention and remedies. Apart from national, state, district level, there are several other disaster management institutions, who are played a decisive role in period of crisis in the country. These primarily include the police, paramilitary forces, national governmental organisation (NGOs), ex-serviceman, fire extinguisher and home guards.

Conclusion

Several attempts have been taken through passing of schemes and formulating policies to curb the natural disaster by the government of India. There are already prevailed a number of schemes under which much is being done and can be done. State Governments need to be stronger to make proper use of the existing plan schemes and give emphasis for implementation of such schemes that will help in transcend the poor conditions created by the calamity. In some cases this implies possible diversion of the funds from other schemes to those schemes for the implementation of which will help to meet the situation. There may also be need in a crisis situation for certain reallocations among the different departments.

The message for the Tenth Plan is that in order to move towards safe national development, development projects should be sensitive towards disaster mitigation. With the kind of economic losses and developmental drawbacks that the country has been suffering year after year, it makes good economic sense to spend a little extra today in a planned way on steps and components that can help in prevention and mitigation of disasters, than be forced to spend many multiples more later on restoration and rehabilitation.

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