

गृह सचिव  
HOME SECRETARY  
भारत सरकार  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

North Block  
New Delhi.

18 December, 2002

Dear

As you are aware disasters have been accounting for substantial losses each year in terms of human lives and social and community assets. Disasters also have the effect of set back in the pace of development by destroying the gains made of investments in the development process.

2. Our efforts to deal with disasters to date have been mainly response oriented - relief and rehabilitation after disasters have struck. A little, if any, efforts have gone into mitigation and preparedness for disasters. Besides our response has been mainly directed to coping with recurring disasters like flood and there has been a perceived lack of capability for coping with disasters requiring specialised interventions like in case of massive earthquakes leading to substantial loss of life and property.

3. It has also been noticed that while disasters require a multi-disciplinary response involving a number of departments of the State Government, in practice disaster response is generally taken to be a function of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department only resulting in lack of planning and preparedness in the other relevant Government Departments. As a result, when a disaster does strike, valuable time is lost in mobilizing the resources from all concerned departments of the Government.

4. Considering the substantial expenditure on relief and rehabilitation year after year there can be little doubt that planned investments in disaster mitigation and preparedness would result in substantial savings on post disaster expenditure. It can safely be said that returns would far outstrip the outlays on mitigation and preparedness.

5. The State Governments have to play a major role in ensuring a shift in focus from post disaster response to prevention, mitigation and preparedness. A set of recommendations for the measures to be put in place by the State Governments in this regard are at Annexure. I would request you to have these examined and implemented at the earliest.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

*N. Gopaldaswami*  
(N. Gopaldaswami)

To

All Chief Secretaries of all States / UT Administrations – as per list enclosed.

Encl. As above

## ANNEXURE

### Recommendations

- (i) The State Departments of Relief and Rehabilitation may be converted into Department of Disaster Management with the responsibility of looking at the whole cycle of disaster management – prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and rehabilitation. Steps for prevention/mitigation will need to be taken across a number of Departments. The Department of Disaster Management will coordinate the steps taken by the different Departments of the Government in these spheres.
- (ii) Mitigation, preparedness and response are multi-disciplinary activities involving a number of Departments. In order to ensure the fullest involvement of the relevant Departments, the State Government may consider setting up a State Disaster Management Authority under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary with the Secretaries of Departments of Water Resources, Health, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Roads, Communications, Rural Development, Public Works, Public Health Engineering, Finance and Home as Members. The Secretary of the Department of the Disaster Management may be the Member-Secretary. This authority will ensure coordinated steps towards mitigation and preparedness as also coordinated response when a disaster strikes.
- (iii) It has been noticed that while the local administration has the requisite skills and capabilities for carrying out search and rescue in recurrent types of disasters like floods, there is lack of capability for specialised search and rescue. Each State may consider setting up specialised search and rescue teams. The teams would need to be composite with one coy of the State Armed Police trained and equipped to carry out specialised search and rescue; one mobile engineering unit with necessary equipment and one medical assistance team. These teams may be constituted and trained together so as to function as a unit under the overall charge of a designated officer. Guidance/advice required with reference to training and equipment will be provided by the Disaster Management Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

- (iv) It has been decided that fire services may be trained and equipped to function as all hazard response units as in other countries. This will necessitate some additional equipment and training to the fire units for carrying out search and rescue in all types of disasters. The Government of India will be initiating a separate project for this.
- (v) The Ministry of Home Affairs had advised the State Governments that composite control rooms may be set up at the State level and at the district levels under the District Magistrates for coordinating law and order as well as disaster management and that allocations under the Modernisation of Police Forces Scheme may be used for this purpose. Steps may be taken to put such control rooms in place quickly with standby communication systems.
- (vi) Disaster mitigation concerns/aspects may be made an essential term of reference for every plan project/development scheme in the areas vulnerable to disasters. In other words, every plan project will need to state as to how it addresses mitigation concerns. Plans/projects specifically addressing mitigation/prevention may be given a priority. The Secretary of Department of Disaster Management may be made a member for all bodies/teams constituted for scrutinizing/approving projects/plans.
- (vii) Funds available under the ongoing schemes may be used for mitigation/preparedness. For example funds under the rural development scheme can be used for construction of cyclone shelters in areas prone to cyclones. Similarly, sites and designs of primary school buildings in flood prone areas may be so selected so that they can serve as shelters in times of floods. The design requirements for primary school buildings and hospitals and other important public buildings in seismic zones V and IV would need to be in accordance with the BIS norms for construction in these zones.
- (viii) Every hazard prone district may draw up specific hazard related plans. These plans may be reviewed/updated in the months of April and May each year.

- (ix) Every district located in area prone to hazards will need to maintain an on line inventory of resources available in the Government, public and private sector. This will enable easy and quick mobilization of resources in case of need. A State-wide on line resources inventory would enable the mobilization of resources from neighbouring districts in cases of need.
- (x) States in seismic zones V and IV may ensure that the BIS building codes for these zones have been adopted and are rigorously enforced by the municipal bodies. All construction in the Government sector in these areas must conform to the BIS code.
- (xi) The initial training curriculum of the field staff - VLWs, Karamcharis, Patwaris, Talhatis, Block Agricultural Officers, Block Animal Husbandry Officers, other Block Supervisors, State Civil Service Officers, Constables, Sub-Inspectors, Dy S.Ps etc. in the States vulnerable to hazards may include capsules on basic dos and don'ts in case of disasters; disaster mitigation and response, search and rescue techniques etc. In-service training may be organised for staff already in service.
- (xii) Special efforts may be put in for education and awareness. This should include awareness of basic design requirements for constructing private housing in seismic zones IV and V as well as in the belt vulnerable to cyclones.
- (xiii) AICTE have been advised to include engineering aspects of disaster mitigation in the engineering courses at the undergraduate level. State Governments may take similar action with reference to engineering colleges under their universities.
- (xiv) CBSE have been advised to include basic disaster related material in the text books for classes 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> - the basic dos and don'ts/precaution to be taken etc. State Governments may advise their Secondary Boards of Education to include similar material in their text books.