

Together, towards a safer India

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Observance of 'Disaster Preparedness Month' in New Delhi district

The District Administration of New Delhi District, Government of Delhi observed the month of August as 'Disaster Preparedness Month' with a vast array of activities and programmes organized throughout the District with different line departments, specialist organizations and other partners and stakeholders. The ambitious programmes focused on generating awareness among the people about the need to adopt and integrate disaster risk reduction measures to safeguard lives, livelihoods, infrastructure and property to withstand the impact of natural disasters and to initiate disaster preparedness activities in their personal as well as socio-economic life. The programmes were undertaken in association with Police, Delhi Fire Service, Civil Defence, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), schools, market associations, NGOs etc.

A vast, burgeoning and ever-expanding city like Delhi underscores by itself the criticality of enhanced levels of disaster mitigation and preparedness in view of its high vulnerability profile with a complex interplay of factors. The activities during the 'Disaster Preparedness Month' were designed to convert the challenge of making Delhi a safer city into an opportunity by actively involving every stakeholder in disaster mitigation and preparedness.

As part of the month-long activities, sensitization and training programmes were conducted in schools; banners displayed with messages, 'A prepared community is a safe community', highlighting the importance of preparedness for disaster safety at prominent places like banks, post offices, offices and commercial establishments and leaflets inserted in newspapers; sensitization meetings and training on preparedness planning; slides on earthquake and fire safety in cinema halls; screening of films on disasters through cable network; debate, painting and essay competitions; rallies by school children; conduct of mock-drills; use of song and drama and 'nukad natak' (street plays); training drills on search and rescue, evacuation, fire fighting, first-aid and earthquake emergency response etc. In addition, posters on earthquake and fire safety were displayed at bus stops by volunteers of Civil Defence. Practical training and demonstrations on evacuation from a collapsed structure, congested areas, preparing stretchers using bamboo sticks and belts and practice of drop-cover-hold exercise was also conducted at different places.

During the Disaster Preparedness Month, community based disaster preparedness planning exercises were initiated in a number of residential areas with involvement of the Resident Welfare Associations.

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A special highlight of the activities was a street play “Der Na Ho Jaye” (We should not be too late) conducted on the lawns of India Gate by an NGO Aradhya in association with the District Administration.



Inclusion of seismic safety aspects in B.Arch. curriculum Workshops by Council of Architecture (COA)

The Council of Architecture (COA) organized a workshop in Priyadarshini College of Architecture, Nagpur with participation of faculties from 22 architectural institutions from Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. The workshop was part of a series of consultation workshops being held across the country with institutions of excellence and experts on inclusion of seismic safety aspects in the B. Arch. curriculum.

Mr. Ramanathan, a practicing Architect, made a presentation on the importance of inclusion of disaster safety aspects in architecture curriculum so that risk mitigation is inbuilt into the development process to make it sustainable. He stressed the need to ensure seismically safer habitats by training of practicing architects and through development and dissemination of resource materials/training modules.

The need of putting in place a system of training and certification of practicing architects was also emphasized. Architect Mr. P.K. Das reiterated the importance of incorporating disaster-resistant technologies in architectural planning, design and construction in all types of constructions.

The syllabus of architecture was discussed with respect to the elements of disaster safe constructions. The specific need to modify the existing course curriculum to integrate disaster safe practices into it was also enumerated. The role of faculties of architectural institutions in training and certifying architects with proficiency in disaster safe designing and construction was also discussed. The interaction concluded with reiteration of the need to suitably amend the existing syllabus and to draft a revised one for inclusion in the B. Arch curriculum at the earliest.

Sensitization of Legislators (MLAs) and workshop on 'Model Building By-laws, Techno-legal Regime and Development Control Regulations' in Assam

A workshop for sensitization of Legislators (MLAs) was held in Dispur, Assam presided over by Hon'ble Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Shri Prithvi Majhi. The Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Tarun Gogoi was the Guest of Honour. The Minister of Revenue and the Additional Chief Secretary were also present in the workshop besides a large number of legislators and senior bureaucrats.

Prof. A.S. Arya, National Seismic Advisor, made an informative presentation on earthquake vulnerability, the need for effective implementation of building by-laws and for better preparedness at all levels and the important role the representatives of people can play in this regard. The entire North-East, being in seismic zone V, faced a grave and imminent threat and it was essential to adopt an appropriate techno-legal regime and enforce it rigorously.

Training and capacity building of Engineers of Hazard Safety Cells

Out of an estimated 105 engineers of Hazard Safety Cells from different States/UTs, 91 engineers from 32 States/UTs have so far been trained under the Capacity Building Programme for training of Engineers in four batches of training conducted at the National CPWD Training Institute at Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. The remaining Engineers would be trained in January, 2006.

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In the absence of adequate mitigation and preparedness measures, the impact of an earthquake would be severe.

A workshop was also held on 'Model Building By-laws, Techno-legal Regime and Development Control Regulations' presided over by Dr. A.K. Bhutani, CEO Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority with presentations by Prof. A.S. Arya and Shri J.K. Prasad Chief (BM), Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC). The presentations stressed the importance of structural mitigation to minimize the impact of earthquakes and adoption and implementation of appropriate by-laws to usher into a safer built environment. A number of technical experts from the Government as well as the private sector participated in the deliberations.

Inclusion of Disaster Management in Sociology syllabus by NCERT

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conducted a two-day workshop on reframing the syllabi for Sociology for standard XI and XII under the Chairmanship of Prof. Y. Singh, Advisor Department of Sociology, NCERT and Prof. Krishna Kumar, Director, NCERT with participation of experts from different universities. It was decided to incorporate a unit on "Environment and Society" in standard XI with a chapter on Environment Crises, Protection and Response dealing with social aspects of disaster management like the role of community and Government in disaster response and the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and NGOs. The proposed book would be circulated to all the Boards.

NCERT had earlier developed the training modules for teacher educators on school safety to look into aspects like safety, health and nutrition, mid-day meals, structural and non-structural safety of schools.

Visit to State Emergency Operations Center by His Excellency the Governor of Assam

The Hon'ble Governor of Assam, Shri Ajai Singh visited the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to interact with officials on preparedness measures. The role of SEOC was explained with particular reference to information networking and database management. All line departments were advised to maintain an inventory of resources in SEOC and prepare and submit their Emergency Support Function (ESF) Plan. Hon'ble Governor spoke to DC of Nalbari District to obtain a first-hand account of preparedness measures.

State-level Training of NSS Programme Coordinators and Programme Officers in West Bengal

A state-level training programme for National Service Scheme (NSS) Programme Coordinators and Programme Officers was organized in Jadavpur University, Kolkata by the Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal. The programme was presided over by Prof. A.N. Basu, Vice Chancellor, Jadavpur University. Shri Sabyasachi Roy, Secretary, Department of Higher Education and Shri P.G. Dhar Chakraborti, Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management were also present. Shri Chakraborti, in his Keynote Address, gave an overview of the national vulnerability profile with specific reference to West Bengal and enumerated measures being implemented by the Government to reduce vulnerabilities and to minimize the impact of disasters

The Inaugural Session was followed by three technical sessions with resource persons focusing on Socio-Economic Impact of Natural Disasters; Earthquake and Flood Mitigation measures; Ecological Disasters; Health Sector Preparedness in Flood Prone Areas and Perspectives on Disaster Management. The Role of NSS and the specific areas of activity in the field of disaster management were also explained. Detailed presentations on facilitating community based disaster planning, generating awareness on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures and on developing a preparedness and response plan in educational institutions were made by Shri Rajeev Issar, resource person under the DRM Programme. The basic concepts of disaster management and the key terms were explained and Officers were urged to initiate disaster management activities in educational institutions and in neighboring communities.

An exhibition-cum-demonstration of tools and techniques used by NSS volunteers for disaster response was organized and demonstrations on evacuation and search and rescue were conducted. Make-shift tents, stretchers and boats used in an emergency situation were displayed and their usage explained by the volunteers.

The Government of Bihar has decided to incorporate DM in course curriculum from class V onwards in Social Science and the text book is being developed with the help of SCERT and ATI, Bihar.

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

- **ASSAM:** In Hailakandi district, block level DM trainers were trained on purifying water through solar disinfection for potable water during disasters to prevent epidemic. The training was conducted in association with Assam University. In Nagaon district, 1800 NCC cadets were sensitized on DRM activities in association with the Commandant of 8th Assam Battalion to be used as trainers for subordinate levels. In Barpeta district, 58 teachers [5 from each block] participated in a training programme for preparation of school evacuation plan, contingency plan on a multi-hazard basis and DM plans for schools. In Goalpara district, DM cells were formed in 8 colleges and 5 schools to coordinate DM activities. The first meeting of State Hazard Safety Cell was held under Chief Engineer PWD in the presence of Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam in which link with the District level bodies was streamlined. The modalities for vulnerability assessment of buildings were discussed and a subcommittee formed for drafting rapid visual screening format. A Deputy Commissioner's Conference was held on 22nd August, 2005 with DM as a major agenda item. Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam addressed the Conference and stressed the need for scientific approach to disaster management. The progress in construction of District EOCs was discussed in detail.
- **DELHI:** A live programme on "Disaster Management in Delhi" was telecast on Doordarshan with Question-Answers on activities under the DRM Programme, community based disaster preparedness, linkages between government and the civil society for effective disaster management, awareness generation and strengthening of capacities at all levels, multi-hazard mitigation, preparedness and response plans for disaster risk reduction and knowledge networking on effective approaches. The questions from viewers were answered by the State Project Officer and other officials.

The District Project Officer (DPO), North-East District, Delhi [Shri K.J. Devasia] has been awarded a Commendation Certificate by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, North-East for his excellent performance in generating awareness on disaster preparedness and mainstreaming disaster management in the District.

- **KERALA:** School Awareness and Safety Programme under UEVRP is being implemented as a means to raise awareness amongst school teachers, students and their families on preparedness and mitigation measures against disasters. The strategy followed is formation of School Safety Advisory Committee, Meeting of School Safety Advisory Committee to prepare guidelines for School Disaster Management Plans (SDMPs), selection of key target schools, workshops for teachers and orientation programmes for principals in school disaster management planning and preparation of SDMPs and conduct of mock-drills. In order to enhance participation, activities like quiz and painting competitions, debate etc. are also planned.
- **MANGALORE:** The first meeting of the City Disaster Management Committee (CDMC) was held under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Dakshina Kannada district and it was decided to include Disaster Management in teachers' training under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, in school education and constitute SDMCs in all schools in the District. Information & Publicity Department was assigned the task of initiating mass awareness campaign in the city. Public Works Department was asked to construct an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and conduct training of engineers, architects and masons in disaster-resistant construction.

Initiatives with Central Board of Secondary Education

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has published the book on Disaster Management for Class X and taking the initiative forward, the Board has also decided to introduce DM in Sociology and Geography for Class XI. The preparation of Chapters and finalization of the content has already commenced.

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