



NATIONAL DISASTER
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
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NDRF NEWS

RAISING DAY 2008 — SPECIAL ISSUE

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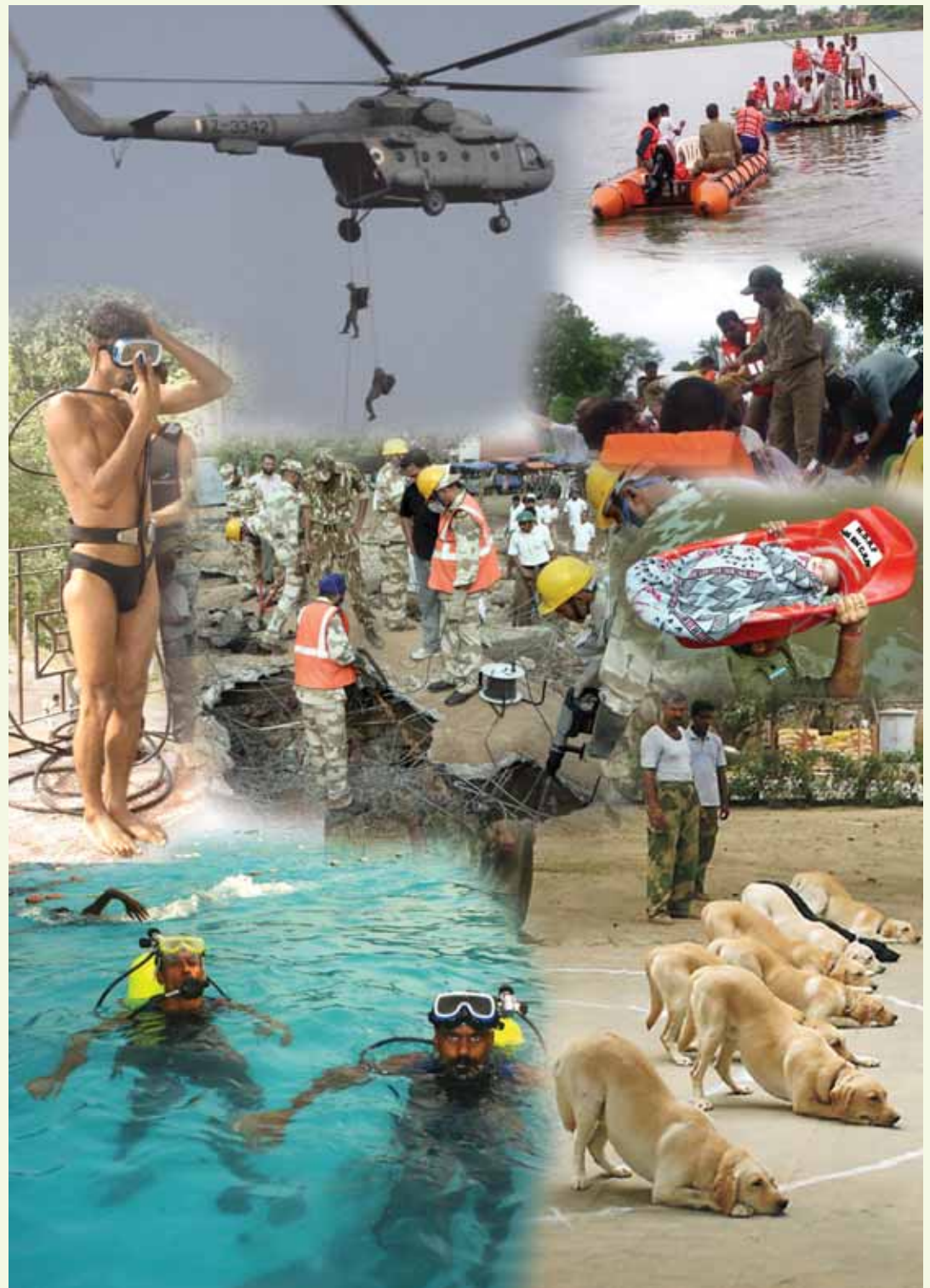
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Message from the Hon'ble Home Minister



शिवराज पाटील
SHIVRAJ V. PATIL
गृह मंत्री, भारत
HOME MINISTER, INDIA

January 16, 2008

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that the NDRF is celebrating its Raising Day on January 23, 2008 and a Souvenir will be brought out to mark the event.

I expect the NDRF to create a world class multi-skilled Force with the state of the art equipment. In the NDRF, the country will have a sizeable specialized response Force capable of dealing effectively with both natural and manmade disasters. I am sure this Force will get actively associated in the training of State Disaster Response Force, Civil Defence, State Police and other stakeholders.

It will also be necessary that NDRF should assist the States in the training of community and thereby generate extensive awareness amongst the people.

I will wish this Force all success.

(SHIVRAJ V. PATIL)

Message from the Hon'ble Vice Chairman



Vice Chairman
National Disaster Management Authority
Government of India

MESSAGE

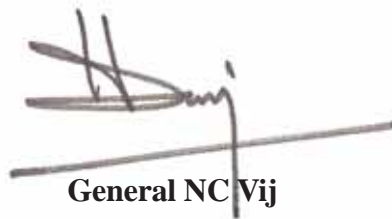
The ability to carry out highly skilled Search and Rescue operations in all types of terrain requires both—high-level expertise and state-of-the-art equipment. Their non-existence has been a serious weakness on our part.

The creation of the National Disaster Response Force has demonstrated the national will to possess a force of world class standard in the field of Search and Rescue operations.

The NDRF has made a good beginning in training of the community at large, by way of assisting in mock exercises and also carrying out awareness generation programmes in the states of their responsibility. They are also responsible for carrying out basic level training of the State Disaster Response Forces.

With their high level of motivation and dedication, I am certain that they shall do the country proud in the hour of need.

New Delhi
14 January 2008



General NC Vij
PVSM, UYSM, AVSM (Retd)

Message from the Member



Member
National Disaster Management Authority
Government of India

MESSAGE

The constitution of the NDRF in early 2006 is one of the signature acts of the true spirit of a 21st century, resurgent, resolute India at the threshold of marking its presence amongst the best on the global map in all aspects of human activities. The 08 bns of NDRF bear the testimony of India's capability of raising a multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled specialist force of international standards capable of responding to any disaster situation within the country and abroad.

In the last two years of its existence, the NDRF has been able to distinguish itself not only in the rescue and relief operations during disasters but also as an effective empowerment tool of the most vulnerable section of people suffering from the trail of disasters. In this regard, the efforts made by the NDRF in the remote districts of the country in the field of community capacity building and awareness of life-saving techniques are indeed commendable.

Brand NDRF has now set out to bring about a change in our fear psychosis towards disasters and raise the resilience level of the people. I am sure that the NDRF will continue to fulfill the nation's expectations from it, bring laurels to itself and lots of blessings from the millions in whose lives they have been able to make a difference.

I wish the best of luck and all success to this Force.

(K.M. Singh)

From the DG's Desk



New Year greetings from the NDRF family! It is our wish that you all have a happy prosperous and most importantly SAFE Year 2008.

When we look back at the year that just ended, we have reasons to be proud of. The fledgling Force has been able to give a great thrust to Training, which is of paramount importance. Being a highly specialised agency, the NDRF demands high levels of proficiency and expertise in a number of areas like Search and Rescue, Basic Life-Support, Water Rescue and handling of Chemical and Biological disasters. It is a matter of satisfaction that a majority of Force members have been put through basic skill development training. Training is of course, an ongoing process and we shall continue to devote our time, energy and resources in perfecting and honing the necessary skills as a part of our relentless search for Excellence.

Much progress has also been made in another critical and complex activity, namely procuring of specialised equipment. Due to the dedicated hard work of all concerned, most of the items have either been procured or the process of acquiring them are nearing completion.

The Commandants have addressed themselves diligently to the task of familiarising themselves with their respective Areas of Responsibility and mapping resources. It is heartening to note that the response from the government machinery, the civil society and the public itself has been very encouraging.

The Force acquitted itself honourably in discharging their responsibilities on each and every occasion when it had been called in to help during calamities and disasters. Worthy of special mention are our operations during the Orissa Cyclone, Bihar flood situation, and Kerala flood relief. Each and every member of the Force deserves to be congratulated for all these achievements.

While the New Year is an occasion to look back at the past year's achievements and pat ourselves on the back, it is also a time to undertake a critical and dispassionate analysis of all activities of the past year. We need to ask ourselves a few hard questions. Could we have done better in any area of activity? Did we really go the extra mile? Did we miss any opportunity? Could we have done what we did, faster, better and in a more professional manner? We need to grapple with the answers so that in the coming year we are able to serve the Nation better.

Our quest for excellence is relentless and persistent. We need to push ourselves a little harder and to set targets just beyond our comfort zone. Excellence, they say, is the gradual result of always striving to do better.

The Government is in the process of seeking assistance from the best Search and Rescue organisations in the world to ensure that the NDRF attains international levels of expertise. Our target is to evolve into an INSARAG External Classified (IEC) team by the year 2010. The Force has a long and hard journey ahead of it to attain that goal. Let each member of the Force resolve to travel the tough and challenging path to glory!

Jai Hind

(K. Koshiy)

Reminiscences



NDRF Workshop, 26–27 Dec 2006 at CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune



The Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Shivraj V. Patil at the occasion of the NDRF workshop said:



“My vision for the NDRF is to create a world class, multi-skilled Force with the state-of-the-art equipment and high technology Force multipliers to provide a specialised response to both natural and man-made disasters. I also see this Force getting actively associated in the disaster phase for the training of the State Disaster Response Forces, State Police, and other stakeholders. In fact, NDRF Bns will form the nucleus around which the states will build their entire Disaster Management structure for capacity development. To realise this objective, we have to accelerate the process for equipping and training of this Force in a time bound manner with due alacrity and commitment.”



Hon'ble Union Home Minister and Hon'ble Vice Chairman, NDMA at the NDRF stall during the 2nd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 07–08 Nov 2007, Hotel Ashok, New Delhi.





A two-day NDRF Commandant's conference was held at NDMA, New Delhi during 29–30 May 2007. The conference finalised many issues regarding deployment, community capacity building, Regional Response Centre (RRC) and uniforms, etc., of the NDRF.



A one-day workshop for the communication officers of NDRF was held on 10 Sept 2007, at NDMA HQ, to discuss and finalise various communication related issues of NDRF Bns.



A delegation from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) visited CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune on 27 Nov 2007 to assess the Search and Rescue capability of the NDRF at the ground level to prepare for the three year MoU between the Gol and SDC for cooperation in advanced Search and Rescue training.



A two-day exhibition cum workshop on "Community Capacity Building and Public Awareness" being undertaken by NDRF Bns was held at BSF NDRF Bn, Kolkata during 25–26 September 2007.



The Indian USAR Team at the UN INSARAG Earthquake Exercise at Shijiazhuang, China in August 2006.



Demonstration given by the Chinese International SAR team at the UN INSARAG exercise.

Specialised Training

Heli-Slithering Course

NDMA organised the visit of commandants of NDRF Bns to Para Brigade, Agra on 01 June 2007 to get a detailed briefing and demo on heli-slithering exercise. Subsequently, 20 personnel of NDRF were sent to Para Brigade, Agra for a 10 day ToT course on conducting heli-slithering exercise and its mock up training between 19–29 June 2007.

Complete heli-slithering training of 1,260 NDRF personnel started in September 2007 will be completed at SFTS, Nahan (H.P.) with the air support of Indian Air Force Station, Sarsawa in March 2008.



Water Rescue Courses

1,500 personnel from NDRF are being trained in water rescue at the Rashtriya Life Saving Society and Sea Explorers Institute at Kolkata between July 2007 to March 2008.



Flood rescue and diver training for 1,500 NDRF personnel at Rashtriya Life Saving Society, Kolkata

NBC Emergency Response



CME Pune and DRDE Gwalior trained 54 Master Trainers in NBC Emergency Management between December 2006 to March 2007.

NISA, CISF Hyderabad conducted the training for NBC first responders of 150 NDRF personnel from CISF, BSF, CRPF and ITBP NDRF Bns between July 2007 to January 2008.

300 personnel of NDRF Battalions i.e., 75 personnel each from BSF, ITBP, CRPF and CISF were trained in six batches at the CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune in the NBC Emergency Responders Course, conducted by master trainers trained at DRDE, Gwalior and College of Military Engineering (CME), Pune between March 2007 to June 2007.



NDRF personnel at CME, Pune



NDRF personnel at the NBC Emergency Responders Course at CME, Pune

Dog Squad



The Dog Squad of CRPF NDRF Bn, Talegaon, Pune



Training of the Dog Squad of BSF NDRF Bn, Kolkata

Landmark Initiatives in Training

NDMA organised specialised training in India and abroad for over 4,000 Disaster Responders from NDRF and Police from various states

International Training

1. INSARAG Asia Pacific Earthquake Exercise, Shijiazhuang, China (04–07 August 2006) for 05 personnel.
2. UNDAC Asia Pacific Induction Course in Korea (17–29 September 2007) for 03 personnel.
3. UNDAC Asia Pacific Refresher Course, Malayasia (10–14 July 2007) for 02 personnel.
4. UNDAC Asia Pacific Induction Course, Christchurch, New Zealand (14–26 October 2007) for 02 personnel.
5. INSARAG Asia Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise, Ulaan Batar, Mongolia (31 July to 02 August, 2007) for 04 personnel.
6. OPCW Chemical Weapons Course in Finland (21–28 September 2007) for 02 personnel.

Training within the country

1. NBC First Responders and Master Trainers Courses for 1,200 personnel at CME Pune, BARC Mumbai, DRDE Gwalior and at NDRF Bns and training institutes (15 batches between December 2006 to June 2007).
2. Water Rescue Training for 1,500 NDRF personnel at Rashtriya Life Saving Society and Sea Explores Institute at Kolkata (12 batches between August 2007 to March 2008).
3. Heli-Slithering Training for 1,260 NDRF personnel with the Air Force at SFTS Nahan, H.P. (06 batches between September 2007 to March 2008).

4. State Police Training of Trainers Course at NISA, Hyderabad for 50 personnel (two batches— November 2006 and November 2007).
5. Disaster Management in Hospitals for 07 NDRF doctors at IHMR, Jaipur (October 2007).



Visit of the Indian delegation headed by Member, NDMA to Singapore Civil Defence Academy. This resulted in finalisation of HAZMAT Specialisation Training at SCDA, Singapore for 20 personnel from India during March-April 2008.

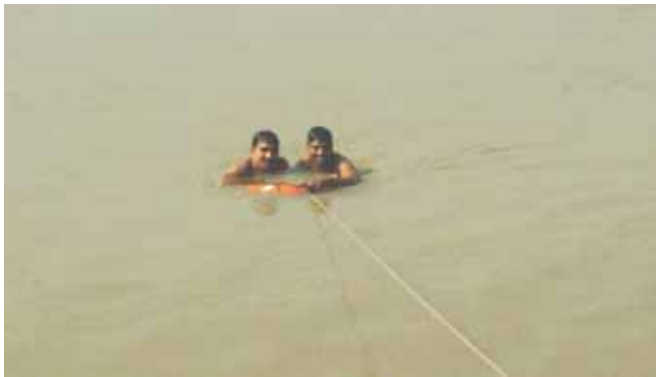


Laying the foundation stone of DM Training Institute at Latur (Maharashtra). This set the pace of the development of DM training infrastructure in the country.

Disaster Response

Vizag, A.P. (Building Collapse)

Rescue operations by CISF NDRF Bn, Arakonnam at a building collapse site at Sri Sai Baba Mandir, Vizag on 15 Nov 2007.



Balasore, Orissa (Flood)

Three SAR teams of CISF NDRF Bn, Mundali were detailed for flood relief and rescue work at Balasore, Orissa in August 2007. During the course of operations, a total of 90 people were rescued and, food and relief material distributed to over 300 people in remote and marooned villages of the district.

Kozhikkode, Kerala (floods)

Two teams from CISF NDRF Bn, Arakonnam were deployed for flood rescue operations in flood hit districts of Kozhikkode and Alappuzha, Kerala in June 2007.



Chandigarh (roof collapse)

ITBP NDRF Bn, Chandigarh responded to the *subzi mandi* roof collapse incident at Chandigarh on 10 June 2007. The teams carried Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) operations to save lives and valuables at the site.

Dhemaji, Assam (Flood)

SAR teams of BSF NDRF Bn, Guwahati covered a distance of approximately 400 km within 10 hours during the night despite adverse navigational and climatic conditions and reached the flood affected site at Dhemaji on 14 July 2007. The team assisted the civil authorities to rescue the natives trapped by the flood and distributed food and other relief material including medicines.



Ratnagiri, Maharashtra (flood)

Two teams of CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune were deployed in Chiplun and Khed (Ratnagiri Dist., Maharashtra) from 30 June 2007 to 03 July 2007 for flood rescue and relief operations. The teams assisted the district administration in Search and Rescue operations, evacuation of people and clearing landslides.

Akola, Maharashtra (Flood)

A SAR team from CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune conducted operations in the turbulent Purana river on 07 July 2007. Three persons were rescued from drowning and they were rendered medical first aid.



Chandmari, Assam (Landslide)

BSF NDRF Bn, Guwahati responded to a massive landslide triggered by heavy rains at Ganesh Nagar under Chandmari Police Station, Guwahati on 19 July 2007. The team conducted SAR operations with available logistic support including the dog squad for approximately five hours and extracted a total of seven bodies from the debris.

Community Capacity Building and Public Awareness



An exhibition was organised on 17 Oct 2007 at NDMA HQ to display the various Public Awareness Material developed by all the NDRF Bns. The Commandants discussed the various issues faced by their respective Bn in conducting such programmes in their area of responsibility.

Bangalore, Karnataka (DM Exhibition)

An International Exhibition on Disaster Management was held at St. Joseph's Indian Boy's High School, Bangalore (Karnataka) between 15–17 October 2007. The exhibition was organised by the department of Home Guards and Civil Defence of Karnataka State. CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune was adjudged the 'Best Stall' during the exhibition and received the First Prize from Shri Rameshwar Thakur, Governor of Karnataka.



Gandhinagar, Gujarat (Flood SAR)

CRPF NDRF Bn, Gandhinagar conducted an extensive public awareness and capacity building programme in 11 flood prone tehsils of Gujarat. The NDRF personnel emphasised on the importance of learning MFR techniques by the community and demonstrated to the people how to deal with a flood situation using objects available at home like empty plastic bottles and boxes, car tubes, temporary wooden boats, rafts made out of barrels and banana leaves, etc.



Amravati University, Maharashtra (Water Rescue)

After rescue and relief operations at Akola in September 2007, the SAR team of CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune, stayed at a university campus in Amravati district to watch the flood situation which had started receding. The team took the initiative to utilise their free time by conducting a public awareness programme in the Amravati university campus for two days by holding a demonstration of life-support systems and use of water rescue equipment.

Panagarh, West Bengal (Medical First Response)

BSF NDRF Bn, Kolkata in association with the Save Life Foundation and the West Bengal Orthopaedic Association organised and conducted a training programme on Highway Rescue in Panagarh, Bardhaman on 22 July 2007. Over 50 civil ambulance drivers and army personnel were trained in highway rescue.



Vadodara and Anand, Gujarat (Flood, Cyclone and Earthquake)

As part of the community capacity building and public awareness campaign, CRPF NDRF Bn, Gandhinagar conducted training exercises on earthquake, flood and cyclone in Vadodra and Anand districts of Gujarat. A total of over 10,000 participants from various schools, colleges, village panchayats and government offices participated in the training held from 06–20 September 2007. The programme included video screening of DM films, live demonstrations, mock exercises and distribution of DM related material.

Srinagar, J&K (NBC Emergencies)

ITBP NDRF Bn, Chandigarh participated in the NBC Disaster Management Seminar organised by J&K Civil Defence at Srinagar in August 2007. NDRF personnel demonstrated the use of NBC equipment and the capability of the specialised NBC team to handle NBC disasters. The local population along with the state administration and emergency services were also present.



Mock Exercises

Chemical Disaster: Vizag, Andhra Pradesh



CISF NDRF Bn, Arakkonam participated in a chemical disaster mock exercise organised by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) at Vizag on 23 August 2007. NDRF personnel carried out SAR, Medical First Response (MFR) and decontamination operations at the site. The exercise incorporated active participation from central and state government officials.

Urban Fire: Bangalore, Karnataka

CRPF NDRF Bn, Pune participated in a mock exercise on urban fire incident on 08 September 2007 at Bangalore organised by NDMA. Activities of NDRF personnel included SAR, MFR and evacuation operations.



Fire: Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir

ITBP NDRF Bn, Chandigarh participated in another fire mock exercise held in the crowded downtown area of Karalkhut in Srinagar on 18 September 2007. NDRF personnel carried out extensive SAR, MFR and evacuation operations with the help of the local administration.

Industrial Disaster: Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

CRPF NDRF Bn, Gandhinagar participated in industrial disaster mock exercise organised by NDMA along with Hindustan Zinc Ltd., in their premises. NDRF personnel conducted SAR and MFR operations on-site. The local administration also played an active role in the exercise.



Articles

Training in Disaster Response—A Mammoth Task

Kamal Kumar, IPS (Retd), Senior Specialist, NDMA

India's high vulnerability to natural disasters** and susceptibility to various kinds of man-made disasters, have led to the Government of India (GoI) taking a number of paradigmatic initiatives in recent years, bringing about a significant change in our approach to Disaster Management (DM), from the hitherto relief-centric outlook to a holistic perspective. The new approach covers the entire DM cycle encompassing prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and rehabilitation. A comprehensive DM Act, enacted in December 2005, provides for institutional mechanisms for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of DM plans, ensuring due measures by various wings of the central and state governments for prevention of disasters, mitigating the effects of disasters and for undertaking prompt, holistic and coordinated response to any disaster situation.

Disaster Response—the Most Critical Element in the Disaster Management Cycle

A comprehensive approach to DM is indeed important for ensuring efficient and effective management of all the phases of the DM cycle—from prevention to mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and rehabilitation. However, in the event of a disaster, the efficacy of the government's effort is going to be judged inevitably by the response and its effectiveness in minimising the loss of lives and property. Naturally so, because 'response' is the most easily visible element in the entire DM cycle. It is, therefore, appropriate that the government has decided to create the NDRF as a specialised force—well-equipped and well-trained to effectively respond to all types of disasters.

Training in Disaster Response

The key to efficiency and effectiveness in disaster response will lie in—more than equipment or anything

else—the effective training and retraining of NDRF personnel. A well-structured training regime, with carefully drawn up course syllabi, a world-class training infrastructure and state-of-the-art training arrangements, has, therefore, to be devised for the purpose. Training in disaster response—as against training in other aspects of DM (prevention, mitigation, relief, rehabilitation, etc.) has to be more operations-oriented with larger proportions of 'demonstration', 'hands-on' and 'simulation' contents than theory covered through the 'talk and chalk' method in classrooms. It requires an elaborate training infrastructure including 'Prop Areas', 'Rubble Fields', etc.

Civil society volunteers and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) too play a significant role in disaster response. They not only supplement the effort of government agencies but in most situations they are the actual 'first responders'. Proper training in disaster response for them can have a multiplier effect on their efficiency. Such training will also lead to a better coordination of action and response between them and the government agencies when they have to work together. Arrangements are, therefore, necessary for their training in disaster response in a structured manner.

Need for Multiple Training Institutions

It is obvious that no single institution can run so many training programmes at a time without compromising on the efficiency and effectiveness of training. Hence there is a need for at least four or five central training institutions, preferably located in different geographical regions of the country. These institutions though primarily meant for the training of NDRF personnel, will also, in addition, take care of the training of trainers of the state government institutions, devise and conduct training programmes for civil society volunteers and NGO personnel in disaster response and

also conduct joint mock exercises involving them, the state government functionaries and NDRF personnel.

Need for Specialisation

Having multiple training institutions will serve another useful purpose—that of developing specialisations in various mutually-exclusive fields of disaster response. The techniques and methodology of search, rescue and other elements of first response are so diverse and different from each other in the cases of earthquakes, cyclones, floods, landslides and avalanches, NBC emergencies and other types of disasters—each demands specialisation of its own kind. Also, specialisation is needed for the training of paramedical personnel and doctors in medical first response. Similarly, specialised facilities are required for canine training for disaster response since each response team is going to have a canine squad. It is difficult for any one single institution to develop specialisation and become a 'Centre of Excellence' in so many diverse fields at a time.

To Sum up

Effective training of NDRF personnel and others concerned with disaster response will hold the key to the nation's ability and effectiveness in minimising the loss of lives and property in the wake of a disaster. The variety of disasters the country is prone to, and the complex components of response techniques and methodologies involved in each of them, render the disaster response training (and retraining) a mammoth task. Yet, given the country's vulnerability to a wide variety of natural and man-made disasters, it requires to be accomplished with urgency and all earnestness.

(Footnotes)

**About 60% of the landmass of the country is susceptible to earthquakes, over 40 million hectares prone to floods, nearly 8,000 kilometres of coastline threatened by cyclones, and 68% of the country's geographical area susceptible to drought.

Training of Responders in Disasters—The Mission and Challenge Ahead

Anurag Sharma, IPS, Director, NISA, CISF, Hyderabad



The Disaster Management Bill passed by the Parliament seeks to constitute a National Institute of Disaster Management which shall plan and promote training and research, documentation and development of national level information base relating to Disaster Management (DM) policies, prevention mechanism and mitigation measures. It also provides for a National Disaster Response Force to be constituted for specialist response. The NDMA has taken a lead in this direction and has envisaged development of four Regional DM Training Centres along with the National Institute of Disaster Management to effectively train the first responders of the NDRF and the various state agencies to tackle the wide variety of disasters that plague our country time and again.

CHALLENGES

The mission that emerges from the above is to prepare first responders to provide quick, effective, timely and

trained response to any disaster to help save the lives of those in peril.

The NDRF and its training institutes therefore face the following challenges in training the first responders for this task. First responders of the eight specialist Battalions from the BSF, CRPF, CISF and ITBP are from different educational and cultural backgrounds. They have been trained by their respective forces to suit the basic jobs of the force concerned, and thus skills imparted during their training consequently have been different in each case. To retrain them in DM as first responders thus requires to evolve training strategies separately for each set of trainees.

The responders should acquire basic skills of Medical First Response; Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue; tackling Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Emergencies; Flood Rescue as well as some special skill to conduct search and rescue in special events like avalanche, landslides, and typhoons. Moreover various NDRF Bns have been designated to specialise in certain areas of

DM. Designing courses for each of these skill sets, which are specifically suited to Indian conditions, is a task which has to be carefully pondered upon.

Most of the training centres as well as the NDRF Bns are still facing a paucity of trained instructors, training equipment and other infrastructural facilities. A concerted effort therefore has to be made to train more specialised instructors with the help of indigenous and foreign experts and to develop infrastructural facilities of international standards. It is imperative that we identify the courses and techniques available all over the world which are suited to Indian conditions or can be modified to suit our requirement. Similarly the emphasis should be on using the local material for training resources as far as possible.

With advancements in technology, new equipments are coming out in the market. Training on the same needs to be developed to keep our responders updated.

The UN has specified the systematic response internationally. This need to be integrated in our training curricula along with plans to conduct joint exercises with internationally recognised USAR teams. This will enable our teams to be ready to work with international teams, if the situation demands.

Though specialised courses in various DM fields are already being conducted, all the responders of the State Disaster Response Forces (SDRFs) have to be given basic training to tackle any kind of disaster. Since India is a vast country and disaster can strike anywhere, it is important for all the SDRFs to have basic training. Therefore a common course involving the basics of all fields has been envisaged to be given to all first responders. The course design and duration have been finalised in consultation with Shri Kamal Kumar, former Director, NPA and approval of the NDMA is awaited.

In order to be abreast of all the various aspects of DM, courses in the following fields also need to be focused upon:

- Incident Command Course
- Urban Search and Rescue Course
- Confined Space Rescue Course and Breathing Apparatus Course
- Vehicle Extrication Course

- Equipment Maintenance Course
- Dead Body Management Course

The NDMA has declared the National Industrial Security Academy (NISA) as a regional level institution for imparting training to the rapid response units, specially with regard to training on Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Emergencies.

With the active assistance of international lead agencies in the field of disaster response like the Asia Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Bangkok and National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), Nepal we have been able to develop Master Instructors of international standards to imparting training and monitor instructors regarding the quality of training. As on date we have 13 Master Instructors with the CISF, and more than 100 instructors to help them.

It is also felt that it is not enough to train the first responders alone but also the senior officers at strategic and tactical levels who are responsible for tackling disasters in the field. This will make them understand the resources and capabilities of the first responders as also the resource requirement and availability for DM. Therefore, apart from these courses for first responders, NISA also organises the Vertical Interaction Course for IPS officers on the theme of DM and regular courses on DM and Natural Disaster Management for District Level Officers as well as IAS officers of the North East region to name a few. The successful conduct of a large number of courses reflects the relevance and appreciation of the theme in the present day context wherein DM is gradually emerging as a field of study.

NISA is now developing various props to give responders a feel of real life scenarios with the technical know-how of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and NSET. Officers have also visited the Singapore Civil Defence Academy to assimilate the latest developments.

No doubt a beginning has been made. But there is still a long way to go before we are in a position to tackle major disasters effectively. In order to face the aforesaid challenges, an integrated approach with long-term planning and a holistic perspective is required, which all of us under the able guidance of NDMA are striving for.

The Role of the Indian Armed Forces In Tsunami Affected Areas

Inspector G.D. Mahasher Hussain, ITBP NDRF Bn, Panchkula



Although, four years have elapsed since the occurrence of the tsunami disaster, terrible memories of the disaster still prevail in the hearts of the tsunami victims. The coast of South and South East Asia, devastated on 26 December 2007 has now begun to rebuild life, aided by unprecedented rescue and relief efforts, in which the Armed Forces played a key role. The great disaster snuffed out more than 2,20,000 lives in minutes and affected 18,94,300 people in 12 countries. By February 2006, the death toll in India had risen to 16,389 with a total of 6,47,599 affected.



Within hours of the report that the tsunami had hit India, the Central Crisis Management Group came into action. Never before had the Army, Navy, Air Force and Central Paramilitary Forces been called upon to assist civilian authorities on such a large scale. The ministry of defence rose to the compelling demands of perhaps the worst peacetime crisis in history. The Govt set up an Integrated Relief Command (IRC) under the command of Vice Admiral Raman Puri in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to speed up relief and rehabilitation work. The Armed Forces, with a unified command of the three wings, rendered a commendable service in coping with the crisis in the far-flung Islands.

Operation Andamans saw the deployment of 32 ships, 25 aircraft, 21 helicopters, 8,000 army troops, 5,500 naval personnel and 2,000 air force personnel. By 2 January 2005, the Indian Air Force had transported 5,000 tonnes of relief materials and rescued 5,000 persons from the tsunami-affected areas.

To help our neighbours in distress three ships from Kochi were sent to Trincomalee and Galle in Sri Lanka. The relief operation for Sri Lanka was given the title 'Operation Rainbow'. The western naval command also dispatched ships and personnel to the Maldives. The relief operation for Maldives was named 'Operation Castor'. India launched 'Operation Gambhir' to augment the relief and rescue efforts in the badly affected areas of Indonesia.

Search and Rescue Teams of the NDRF played a crucial role in the tsunami-affected areas. Each team consisted of doctors, paramedics and engineering staff with specialised equipment. Specialised boats were used by the search and rescue teams to transport the victims to safer places. They repaired damaged roads and made new ones to speed up the distribution of relief material. They removed debris and set up temporary shelters and schools for the victims. It was tough work to dispose the bodies found in the cleared debris, which were in an advanced state of decomposition. The locals were not in a condition to do this work because they were suffering from psychological depression. Search and rescue teams of the NDRF did this work efficiently and immediately. They also organised cultural programme to bring back normalcy amongst the tribal community of the Islands.

Though, many governmental and non-governmental organisations played an important role, the Armed Forces gave invaluable support in engineering, communication, transport, rescue and relief, emergency medical services, field sanitation, food and drinking water supply and so on.

Note: The author of this article is a postgraduate in Disaster Mitigation. This article is based on the thesis he wrote during his post-graduation. He has performed Search and Rescue duty during the tsunami disaster at Car Nicobar as a Team Commander. Presently he is doing a Ph.D. in Disaster Mitigation.

