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ARMED FORCES IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The armed forces of India, have an important role to play in managing disasters especially providing relief to the affected people and restoring essential services like water, communication connectivity and power supply. You must be aware of natural disasters that have occurred in India. The Latur earthquake, floods in Chennai in 2015, Uttarakand floods of 2013, Tsunami in 2004, Kerala floods of 2018, etc. In all these incidents, the armed forces of India had a major role to play.

Though Armed Forces are principally involved in the security of the Nation against external threats, they are now being involved more and more in managing disasters with in the country and even in other countries in the neighbourhood. Their capability and capacity to respond quickly and efficiently and handle such situations make the armed forces the ideal choice as the first line of response.



Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- define disaster and the need for disaster management;
- appreciate the role of Indian Armed Forces in managing disasters;
- explain the compositions and function of NDMA and
- Practice do's and don'ts before and after cyclones.

17.1 What are Disasters

'Disasters' are occurrences that are sudden and cause huge destruction to humans, animals and environment. There are heavy losses that could be human, material,



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economic or environmental. Disasters are classified as natural and man-made.

‘Natural Disasters’ are all hazards that occur in nature like earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, floods, tsunamis, and cyclones that result in the loss of human life as well as destruction of property. Man-made disasters occur due to human action or inaction. These could be industrial accidents, transport accidents, oil spills, nuclear explosions, fire or stampedes.

- **Natural Disasters**
 - Earthquakes;
 - Floods; Urban floods;
 - Cyclones;
 - Landslides;
 - Tsunamis;
 - Heat wave.
- **Manmade Disasters**
 - Nuclear, Biological and Chemical;
 - Oil Spills in oceans;
 - Pollution

17.1.1 Disaster Management

Since natural phenomena cannot be averted, the effects alone can be managed. The loss of lives can be reduced and normal life can be restored. This is the process of disaster management. The natural disasters result in loss of homes, cattle, human lives and destruction of property.

So, the first task is to arrange for relief supplies like food, clothing and medicines to reach the affected people. Search and rescue of missing persons or animals is also part of managing disasters. Since natural disasters also severely damage infrastructure like roads, bridges, railway lines and power supply restoration of these is a principal task of disaster management teams.

17.2 Armed Forces in Disaster Management

In India the Armed Forces are the first responder when disaster occurs. They have equipment, training and a professional response to any situation. The lack of a civil defense system is also a reason for the dependence on the armed forces in times of calamity. Some specific disasters like oil spills, nuclear accidents require special equipment and training.

The armed forces possess capabilities like airlift or the ability to carry large number of men and material to any place across the country. Their expertise in the field of search and rescue is unmatched. The armed forces can also bring in equipment for repairing damaged roads or building makeshift bridges.

17.2.1 Examples of Disaster relief by Indian Armed Forces

The Armed Forces are the first responders to calls of disaster management. During the tsunami of 2004, Indian armed forces carried out one of the biggest peacetime relief operations. The armed forces helped victims not only within India but in other countries too, namely, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Indonesia. Using Naval ships, helicopters and aircraft Indian Navy supplied food, safe drinking water, medical facilities sanitation and shelter. They also quickly restored water and power supply. The medical teams helped prevent epidemics and diseases.

- During Cyclone Wardha, Indian Navy moved supplies by ships to Chennai. Air dropping of food packets to the affected and airlifting of stranded and injured people was also undertaken.
- The neighbouring country of Nepal was severely affected by earthquake in April 2015 and the Indian Army was among the first to dispatch relief material and men to help the mountain nation tackle with the aftermath of the natural calamity. Operation Maitri was launched by Indian Army where large transport aircrafts, Mi 17 helicopters evacuated Indian and foreign citizens. Indian Air Force airlifted medical personnel, engineering teams, water, food, blankets and tents.
- In November-December 2017, Cyclone Ockhi which ravaged the coast of Kanyakumari as well as Kerala and Lakshadweep also saw the Indian Armed Forces responding. The Indian Navy transported four tonnes of food, water, blankets, raincoats and mosquito nets to the island of Lakshadweep. This included searching for missing fishermen and transporting relief supplies to the affected.

Even in the case of manmade disasters the armed forces have performed vital assistance. The accidental oil spill caused by tanker ships can be tackled by Armed Forces as they are trained and possess specialised equipment.

17.3 National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

India has an organisation called National Disaster Management Authority for managing disasters. They have response teams in every state as well as in the Centre. The response teams at the centre are called National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF). At the state level it is called State Disaster Relief Force (SDRF). The response teams are trained by armed forces.

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Armed Forces and its Role in Internal Security



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Fig 17.4 - NDMA EMBLEM

NDMA VISION

"To build a safer and disaster resilient India by a holistic, pro-active, technology driven and sustainable development strategy that involves all stakeholders and fosters a culture of prevention, preparedness and mitigation."

During Floods

Do's

	Turn off power and gas connection; be alert for gas leaks		Stay away from sewerage lines, gutters, drains, etc.
	Evacuate low lying areas and move to safer places.		Stay away from electric poles and fallen power lines to avoid electrocution
	Drink boiled/chlorinated water		Watch out for broken electric poles and wires, sharp objects and debris

Fig 17.5 - Poster Issued by NDMA for Floods

17.4 Do's and Don'ts

1. BEFORE CYCLONE

- ⊖ Ignore rumours, Stay calm, Don't panic
- ⊖ Keep your mobile phones charged to ensure connectivity; use SMS
- ⊖ Listen to radio, watch TV, read newspapers for weather updates
- ⊖ Keep your documents and valuables in water-proof containers
- ⊖ Prepare an emergency kit with essential items for safety and survival
- ⊖ Secure your house; carry out repairs; don't leave sharp objects loose
- ⊖ Untie cattle/animals to ensure their safety

Fishermen Should

- ⊖ Keep a radio set with extra batteries handy
- ⊖ Keep boats/rafts tied up in a safe place
- ⊖ Don't venture out in the sea

2. DURING AND AFTER CYCLONE

A) If Indoors

- ⊖ Switch off electrical mains, gas supply
- ⊖ Keep doors and windows shut
- ⊖ If your house is unsafe, leave early before the onset of a cyclone
- ⊖ Listen to radio/transistor
- ⊖ Drink boiled/chlorinated water
- ⊖ Rely only on official warnings

B) If Outdoors

- ⊖ Do not enter damaged buildings
- ⊖ Watch out for broken electric poles and wires, and other sharp objects
- ⊖ Seek a safe shelter as soon as possible

Fig. 17.6 Poster Issued by NDMA for Cyclones

The organisational strength, discipline and response of the armed forces make them the most appropriate responder in times of crisis especially in disaster situations. Until the National Disaster Management Authority gains more experience and expertise in handling disaster management situations, the armed forces will continue to provide vital support and remain the bulwark of efforts at managing disasters in a vast country like India.



Intext Exercises

17.1

1. State whether the statements are True or False -
 - a. Tsunami is a manmade disaster. T/F
 - b. NDMA stands for National Danger Management Authority. T/F
 - c. During floods one must switch off electricity and gas in the house. T/F
2. What characteristics of armed forces are best suited for managing disasters?



What You Have Learnt

- Disasters are occurrences that are sudden and cause great harms to humans and animals.
- There are two types of disasters. Manmade and Natural disasters.
- You have also studied as how to manage disasters that affect the common people.

Module -VI

Armed Forces and its Role in Internal Security



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Module - VI

Armed Forces and its Role in Internal Security



Note

Armed Forces in Disaster Management

- The role played by The Indian Armed Forces in helping the people by carrying out various types of relief operations are a source of inspiration.
- India now has a NDMA and is developing resources and men required to carry out disaster relief operations all over India.
- At the centre there is NDRF and the states have SDRF.
- The Armed Forces of India have the capability and capacity to assist during any type of disasters and are the first choice for providing immediate relief.
- Do's and don'ts before, during and after a disaster are also very essential to know to tackle emergency situation.



Terminal Questions

1. Explain the role of armed forces in managing disasters with the help of examples.
2. Using the examples as illustration how would you assess the ability of armed forces in disaster management?
3. What is the full form of NDMA? Describe its organisation and functioning.
4. Highlight any five things to be done before a cyclone and three things each during and after a cyclone.

Answers to Intext Questions

17.1

1. (a) False
(b) False
(c) True
2. Discipline, Training and Professional response.