

Relief & Rehabilitation System In India.

During the International Decade for Natural Disaster Management (IDNDR), Cabinet Committee on Natural Disaster (CCNC) has been constituted to :

- (a) examine, direct and control programmes for reducing the adverse impact of natural calamities.
- (b) direct and monitoring implementation of relief measures in the wake of natural calamities and
- (c) direct implementation of programmes to give effect to the objectives of IDNDR.

A National Advisory Council (NAC) on IDNDR has been established under the Chairmanship of Union Agriculture Minister

MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL DISASTERS

APPROACH :

The country has an integrated administrative machinery for natural disasters management. Disaster preparedness, relief and disaster mitigation should underline development programmes in order to achieve cost effectiveness. The functional expertise of line departments and quick response system through designation of nodal and focal points are the cornerstones of the administrative arrangements for responding to natural disasters.

ROLE OF CENTRE AND STATES :

The basic responsibility for undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures in the event of natural disasters is that of the State Governments concerned. The role of the Central Government is supportive, in terms of supplementation of physical and financial resources and complementary measures in sectors like transport, warning and interstate movement of foodgrains. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation DAC is the nodal Department in Government of India.

CONTINGENCY ACTION PLAN :

A National Contingency Action Plan (CAP), has been notified by DAC; it facilitates the launching of relief operations without delay. This is updated every year. CAP identifies the initiatives required to be taken by various Central Ministries/Departments in the wake of natural calamities, sets down the procedure and determines the focal points in the administrative machinery. A copy of CAP is placed at Annexure-V.

STATE MACHINERY :

At the State level, the State Relief Commissioner (or Secretary, Department of Revenue) directs and controls the relief operations through Collectors or Deputy Commissioners, who are the King-pin of all relief operations, coordination, direction and control at the district level.

RELIEF RESPONSIBILITY :

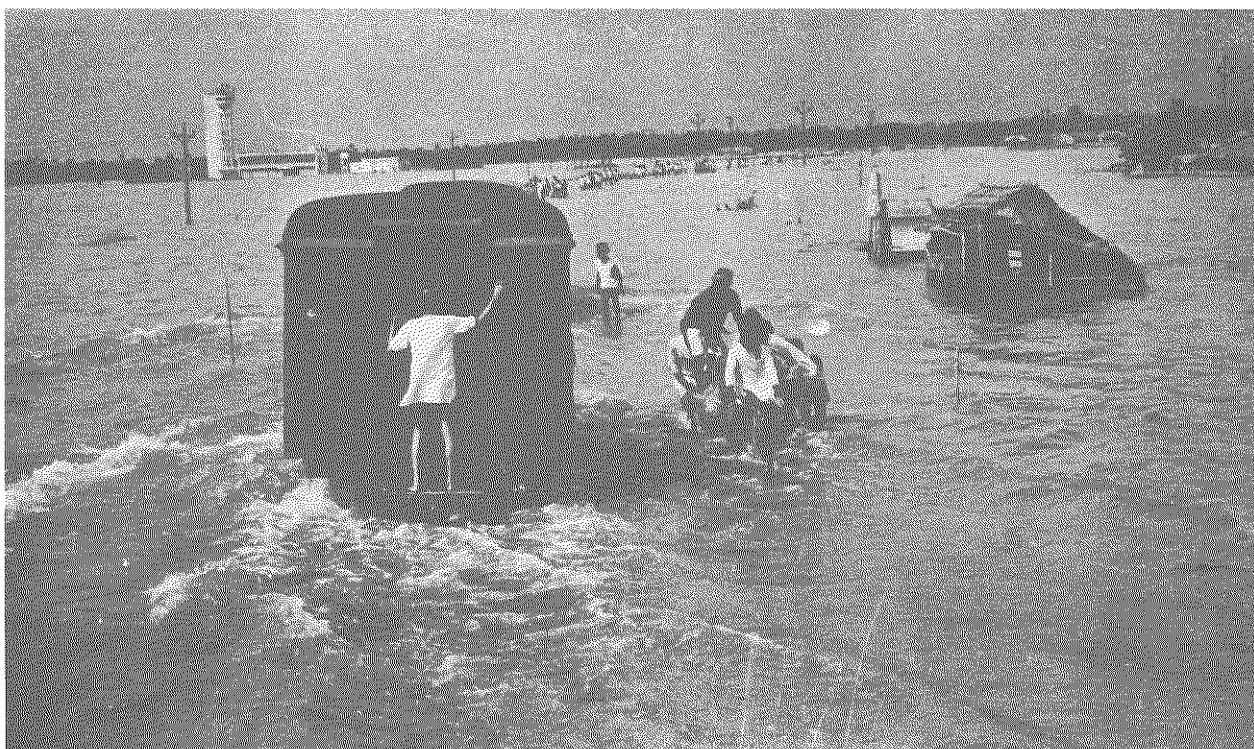
The State Governments are autonomous in organizing relief operations in the event of natural disasters and in initiating long-term measures. The Union Government supplements the State Relief effort by initiative supportive action in complementary sectors falling within its purview in accordance with the recommendations of Finance Commissions constituted from time to time.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR FINANCING RELIEF :

As per the Scheme for financing the relief expenditure which was based on the recommendations of VII & VIII Finance Commissions and was in force till 31st March, 1990. Every State Government had margin money at its disposal for meeting the emergent expenditure in the wake of natural calamities. This margin money was shared equally by both Central and the SGs. The SGs were required to incur the expenditure on relief operations from State Share of margin money in the first instance. They would request for release of the Central share of margin money keeping in view the severity of the situation after sending full details of the expenditure incurred on relief operations. In case the magnitude of the calamity warranted incurring of expenditure beyond the total margin money of a particular State, the SG concerned would submit a memorandum seeking central assistance for natural calamities. On receipt of the memorandum from a SG, a multidisciplinary Central Team was constituted to make an on the spot assessment of the damage and assistance required for relief operations. The Report of the Central Team was then placed before the High Level Committee of Relief (HLCR) for determination of ceilings of expenditure. The recommendations of the HLCR formed the basis for a decisions of the Ministry of Finance on the quantum of central assistance.

NINTH FINANCE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

On the recommendations of the IX Finance Commission, the scheme for financing relief expenditure has been revised. A copy of the revised scheme is placed at Annexure-VI. As per this scheme, each State has a corpus of funds called Calamity Relief Fund (CRF), administered by a State level Committee, headed by the Chief Secretary of the State Government. The size of the corpus is determined having regard to the vulnerability of the State to different natural calamities and the magnitude of expenditure normally incurred by the State on relief operations. The corpus is built by annual contributions of the Union Government and the SGs concerned in the ratio of 3:1. At present, the aggregate annual accretion in the States' CRF amounts to Rs. 804.00 crores. The SGs are free to draw upon this corpus for providing relief in the event of any natural calamity. In the event of a major disaster warranting intervention at the national level, a provision exists for the Union Government to supplement the financial resources needed for relief operations.



CONSTITUTION OF EXPERT GROUP AND COMMITTEES

In pursuance of the recommendations of the 9th Finance Commission, an Expert Group has been constituted to monitor the relief work in the States utilizing the calamity relief fund and to tender advice to the States in relief matters. This group includes the representatives of the various concerned Central Ministries/Departments/organizations/Institutions as also the representatives of the SGs. On the recommendations of the Expert Group, the following three committees have been constituted :

- (i) Committee on Research and Development of Resources on Drought Forecasting and Management.
- (ii) Committee on Research and Development of Resources on Floods Forecasting and Management.
- (iii) Committee on Research and Development of Resources on Forecasting and Management of Natural Calamities other than Drought and Floods.

NATIONAL POLICY :

Traditionally, relief in the wake of natural calamities has been treated as the primary responsibility of the States. Successive Finance Commissions have also reiterated this position. Even though the States are primarily responsible for relief activities, the Central Government associates itself with measures aimed at ameliorating the sufferings of the people on account of natural calamities. Towards this end, the Central Government, with its resources, physical and financial does provide the needed help and assistance to buttress relief efforts in the wake of major natural calamities. The dimensions of the response at the level of National Government are determined in accordance with the existing policy of financing the relief expenditure and keeping in view the factors like (i) the gravity of a natural calamity, (ii) the scale of the relief operation necessary, and (iii) the requirements of Central assistance for augmenting the financial resources at the disposal of the State Government.

Types of Response :

The Central response can be :

- (i) Policy response, and
- (ii) Administrative response.

Policy response :

The policy response to a natural calamity would be provided by the Prime Minister, Cabinet Committees and the Agriculture Ministers. The objectives of the policy response would be :

- (a) to empathise with the sufferings of the people affected by natural calamity; and
- (b) to sub-serve long term and short term policy objectives of the Government.

Administrative response : The response of the Administration to a situation arising out of a natural calamity can be on account of :

- (i) a follow-up of a policy objective of the Government;
- (ii) the need for an assessment of the situation and for a central response;
- (iii) States' requests for Central assistance; and
- (iv) the need for information as a governance objective.

Central response : Central Government's response, at the policy level, to a natural calamity would lead to Central initiatives in the form of:-

- (i) visits of the calamity affected areas by President, Prime Minister and other dignitaries;
- (ii) activating the administrative machinery for assisting in relief measures; and
- (iii) setting up a machinery for implementing, reviewing and monitoring of relief measures.

The administrative response at the Central Government level would broadly relate to :-

- (i) operational requirements; and
- (ii) provision of Central assistance as per existing policy.

The operational aspects of the administrative response could, further, be classified into :-

- (i) Primary relief functions, and
- (ii) Secondary relief functions.

PRIMARY RELIEF FUNCTIONS :

The primary relief functions of the Central Government would relate to :

- (i) forecasting and operation of warning systems;
- (ii) maintenance of uninterrupted communication;
- (iii) wide publicity to warnings of impending calamity, disaster preparedness and relief measures through TV, AIR and Newspapers;
- (iv) transport with particular reference to evacuation and movement of essential commodities and petroleum products;
- (v) ensuring availability of essential commodities at reasonable prices particularly the commodities through the Public Distribution System;
- (vi) ensuring availability of medicines, vaccine and drugs;
- (vii) preservation and restoration of physical communication links;
- (viii) investments in infrastructure; and
- (ix) mobilisation of financial resources.

SECONDARY RELIEF FUNCTIONS :

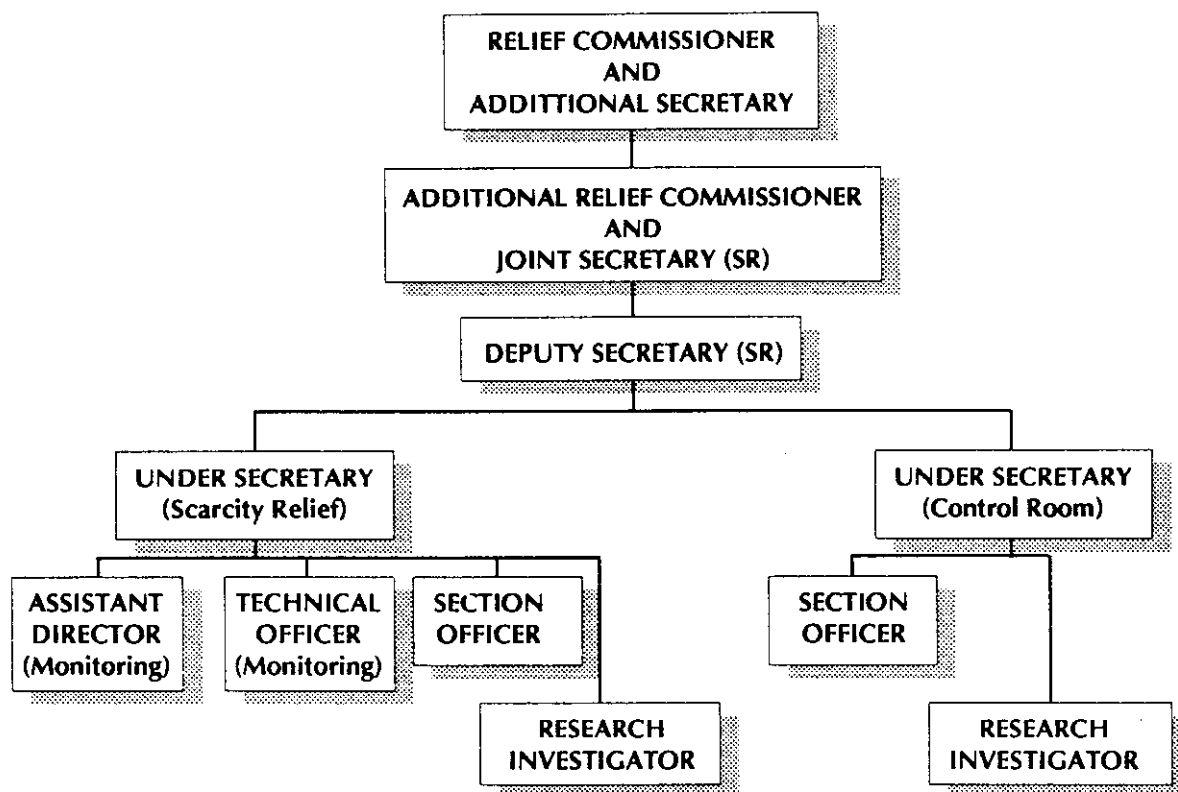
The secondary functions of the Central Government which supplement the States' relief efforts, would relate to :

- (i) flood/inflow forecasts from the Central Water Commission;
- (ii) relief, rehabilitation and restoration through military aid to civil authorities;
- (iii) contingency plans for crops, cattle preservation nutrition and health measures;
- (iv) technical and technological inputs for provision of drinking water;
- (v) technical assistance in the water budgeting and water management for various uses; and
- (vi) coordination of the activities of the State agencies and voluntary agencies.

SCARCITY RELIEF DIVISION :

For ensuring appropriate policy and administrative response to natural calamities, a clear identification of the nodal organisation and the pattern of inter-action between the different Government functionaries would be necessary. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) in the Agriculture Ministry is the nodal Department for all matters concerning natural calamities relief at the Centre. In the DAC, the Relief

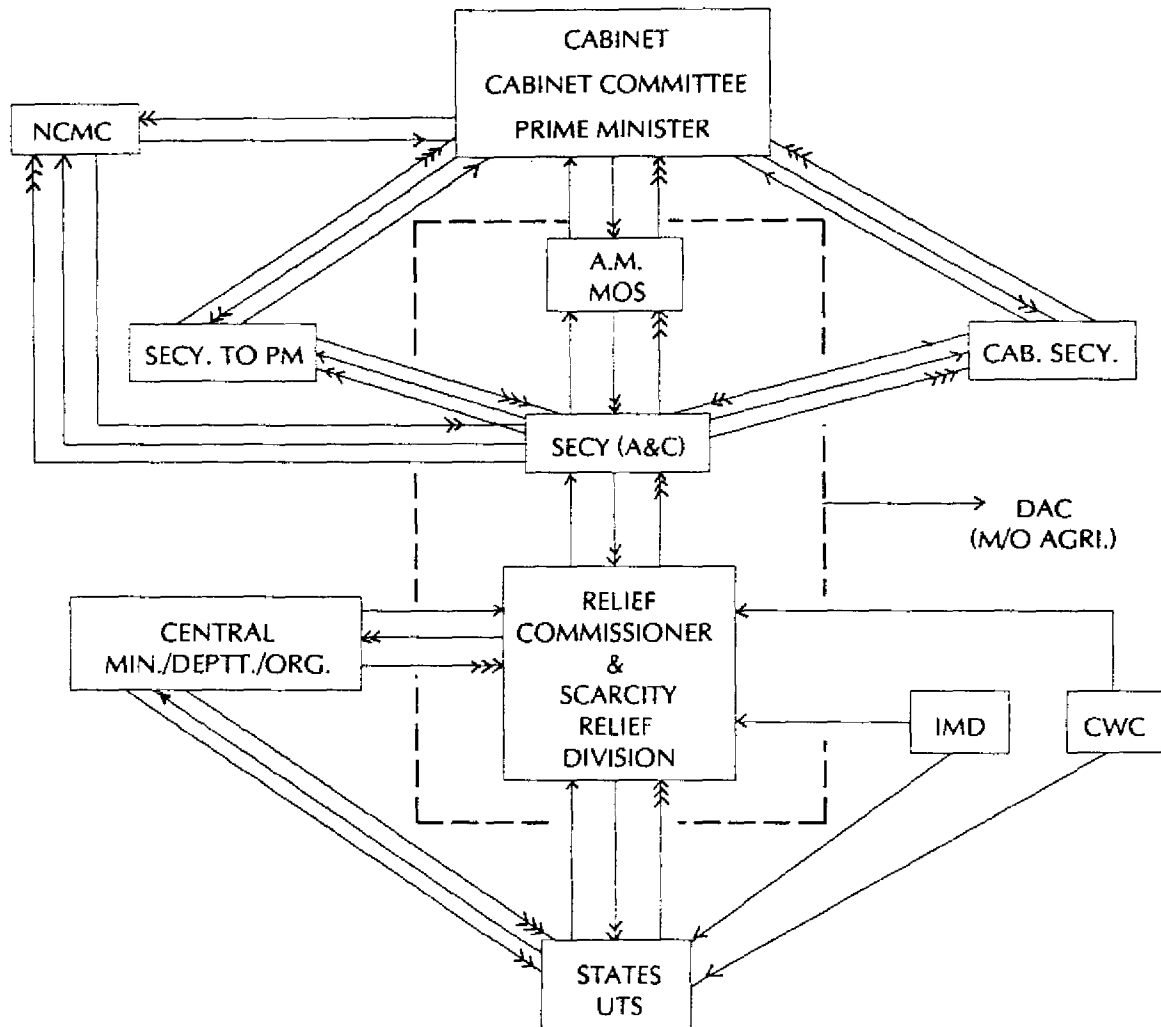
Commissioner functions at the nodal officer to coordinate relief operations for all natural calamities. The organisational set up of Searcity Relief Division of DAC is given below :-



INTER ACTION PATTERN :

The Central Relief Commissioner would receive information relating to forecast/warning of the natural calamity from the Director General, India Meteorological Department (IMD) or from the Central Water Commission on a continuing basis and would keep the Secretary (Agriculture & Cooperation) and through him the Agriculture Minister and the Cabinet Secretary and the Secretary to Prime Minister and through them, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the "National Crises Management Committee (NCMC)" informed. He would, whenever required, also disseminate the information to different Central Government Ministries/Departments and the State Governments for appropriate follow-up action. He would monitor the development of the situation on a continuing basis and would provide the necessary feed-back, through the agriculture Secretary to the Agriculture Minister, Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The pattern of inter-action amongst the different authorities and Governments in the context of occurrence of natural calamities is depicted in the following diagram :-

NATURAL CALAMITIES — INTER-ACTION PATTERN

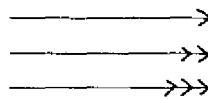


LEGEND

INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION/DIRECTION

FEED BACK



India, in recent years, is comparatively self-sufficient in comparison to other developing countries, in managing natural disasters. India no longer is totally or to a large extent dependent on international aid to combat natural disasters as it is true for most underdeveloped countries.