

The Indian Army : An Illustrated Overview

Squadron Leader Rana TS Chhina (Retd)

On the afternoon of the 26th of September a function to launch the book "The Indian Army: An Illustrated Overview" was held in the Major General Samir Sinha Auditorium of the USI. Shri AK Antony, the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, who had kindly agreed to release the book, was the Chief Guest on the occasion. General JJ Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of Army Staff, and Lieutenant General Thomas Mathew, AVSM, Adjutant General, were the other honoured guests, along with a host of other senior retired and serving officers and ladies who attended the launch. Notable amongst the senior retired officers in the audience were Major General UC Dubey who was commissioned in 1928 and is today the oldest King's Commissioned Indian Officer at 98 years of age, Lieutenant General ML Thapan, PVSM and Lieutenant General MN Batra, PVSM, AVSM.

Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM, VrC, Director USI, commenced the proceedings by welcoming the dignitaries and guests to the function. He recalled the origins of the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research (CAFHR) under whose aegis the book had been compiled and published. He pointed out that although the USI was over 137 years old, the Centre was a relatively recent addition to the Institution. The CAFHR was set up under the aegis of the USI on 1st December 2000, to sponsor and encourage the study of the history of the Indian Armed Forces, and to be the repository of historical documents, artefacts, memorabilia and so on.

General Nambiar went on to observe that since then the Centre has blossomed into a recognised authority on military history and has sponsored a number of projects, prominent among them being *The French Military Influence in India* by the

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late Lieutenant General Gurbir Man Singh, a biography of General KS Thimayya by Brigadier CB Khanduri and a History of Low Intensity Conflicts by Lieutenant Colonel Vivek Chadha, who also played a great supporting role in the publication being currently released. About four years back the Centre undertook the compilation and publication of a *Brief History of the Indian Army* that encapsulated almost two hundred years of history in an 'easy-to-read' 400-page book for our young officers, university students and other such target readership.

Speaking of the present publication, General Nambiar informed the gathering that when approached with the proposal to compile an illustrated Coffee Table Book on the Indian Army earlier this year, the USI had accepted the project with some trepidation in context of the time-frame within which the project was to be completed. This was done since apart from being a rewarding challenge, it would enable the archival of some invaluable material and photographs. The assignment was taken on by the Secretary of the CAFHR himself, and no effort was spared to do justice to what was indeed a compelling challenge.

The Secretary CAFHR in his address stated that the book started as the brainchild of the COAS. General J.J. Singh, who felt that a suitable overview of the genesis and development of the Indian Army over the ages would be of immense interest and extremely beneficial both as a means of educating young officers and soldiers as well as informing the public at large. In this endeavour, the COAS was whole heartedly supported by the Adjutant General, Lieutenant General Thomas Mathew who worked out the modalities of the project with the USI.

The book was accordingly intended to provide the reader with a glimpse of the myriad facets of one of the most fascinating institutions of the Indian State – The Indian Army. Working on the premise that one picture is worth a thousand words, an illustrated overview was considered to be the best method of covering the vast span of the Army's long and illustrious history in the limited space available. However, space was not the only constraint the project team was working with. Time was a major factor, posing an almost unattainable deadline and it was only the dedicated hard work and perseverance of a variety of agencies in general and the team members in particular, that

enabled the project to be finished within the stipulated time. The Secretary CAFHR here made special mention of the untiring hard work put in by Lieutenant Colonel Vivek Chadha, Ms Shairi Mathur and especially Captain Suresh Sharma (Retd) who provided most of the contemporary photographs for inclusion in the book. Captain Sharma's diligence and dedication to his work, often under extremely trying circumstances were especially remarked upon.

The book attempts to provide an illustrated overview of the genesis and development of the Indian Army over the last four centuries. It covers the amazing diversity of the terrain over which an Indian soldier operates during his service career; the broad ethnic canvas that goes into making up the Army's constituent elements; the various indigenous and foreign elements that have influenced the Indian military ethos; an introduction to the Army in its present form and lastly; a brief glimpse at some of the myriad facets of the Army from the colonial era to the present day.

In structuring the book it was decided to follow a ratio of 1:3 in terms of weightage for pre and post-Independence events and illustrations. We have today matured enough as a society to come to terms with various aspects of our colonial past and the armed forces are no exception to this. Their deployment in the numerous campaigns of the nineteenth century notwithstanding, Indian soldiers fought on a global arena for the first time during the First World War where they gained everlasting fame on the battlefields of France, Flanders and Mesopotamia. During the Second World War, the Indian Divisions were to gain worldwide fame as some of the most magnificent fighting formations in the history of warfare and the Indian Army was to become the largest volunteer army ever raised in the history of human conflict. The British Indian Army is an indelible part of our military heritage and is chronicled as such within the pages of the book. Armies are not built overnight; and were it not for the battle-hardened units of the Indian Army, fresh from the battlefields of North Africa, Italy and Burma, who were flung into the breach to stem the tide of the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir in October 1947, India would have lost the vale of Kashmir to the aggressors.

The contribution of the Indian Army towards nation building has been immense and it is only now that this important aspect is

becoming the subject of academic study. The revolt of 1857 was primarily a military event that became the defining moment for sowing the seeds of an Indian national identity. Subsequently, the Singapore Mutiny in 1915, the disaffection amongst personnel of the 23rd Cavalry and the 15th Lancers during the First World War, the Garhwalis during the Peshawar Riots in 1930, and the formation of the INA from Indian POWs during World War II, were all events that shook the colonial authorities to the core and were largely instrumental in hastening the process of Indian Independence. Even today, it is one of the most effective and reliable instruments of last resort available to render assistance to the Nation in times of need, both in war and peace.

A number of little known snippets of information about the history, customs and traditions of the Indian Army have been included in the book, including the story of the Indian soldier who won the Indian Order of Merit four times, then the equivalent of being awarded the Victoria Cross or Param Vir Chakra with THREE bars.

While the team was conscious that to trace the genesis and evolution of as complex a subject as the Indian Army in the extremely limited time and space as was available, it was a near impossible task to cover it in its entirety. There were bound to be areas that had been missed out but it was reiterated that the book was merely an overview and not a comprehensive catalogue of the subject.

The COAS then addressed the gathering. He congratulated the team and lauded the efforts of the USI in preserving the military heritage of the country. He stressed that the book was but an introductory backdrop and hoped that it would form the foundation of many more such projects that would serve to highlight specific aspects of the illustrious history of the Indian Army. He also expressed the hope that suitable efforts would be made to chronicle the efforts of the nation's Armed Forces during the conflicts of 1962, 1965 and 1971. The Hon'ble Raksha Mantri then released the book and in response to General JJ Singh's request for the production of the contemporary war histories, said that he and his ministry would extend their full cooperation to the endeavour.

The function ended with a vote of thanks by the Secretary CAFHR.

Disaster Management at the National and State Levels

General NC Vij, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM (Retd)

Introduction

In the recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters in the World and their consequential effects, in terms of lives lost and financial losses. The global economic losses due to disasters from the 1960s to the 1990s show almost a nine fold increase.

The economic losses suffered due to disasters in India from 1991 to 2005, also depict an alarming trend in the degree of vulnerability and exposure to risk amounting to financial loss of nearly 2 per cent of the GDP.

Initiatives by Government of India (Gol)

The Gol in recognition of the importance of Disaster Management (DM) as a national priority, had set up a High-Powered Committee in August 1999 and also an All Party National Committee on Disaster Management after the Gujarat earthquake, for making recommendations on a comprehensive institutional framework for disaster management in the Country.

Disaster Management Act 2005

On 23 December 2005, the Gol took a defining step by enacting the Disaster Management Act. This is a unique legislation which provides for requisite institutional mechanism for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of the disaster management plans, ensuring measures by various wings of the Government for prevention and mitigating effects of disaster and for undertaking a holistic, coordinated and prompt response to any disaster situation.

Text of the talk delivered at the USI on 25 July 2007.

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National Disaster Management Authority

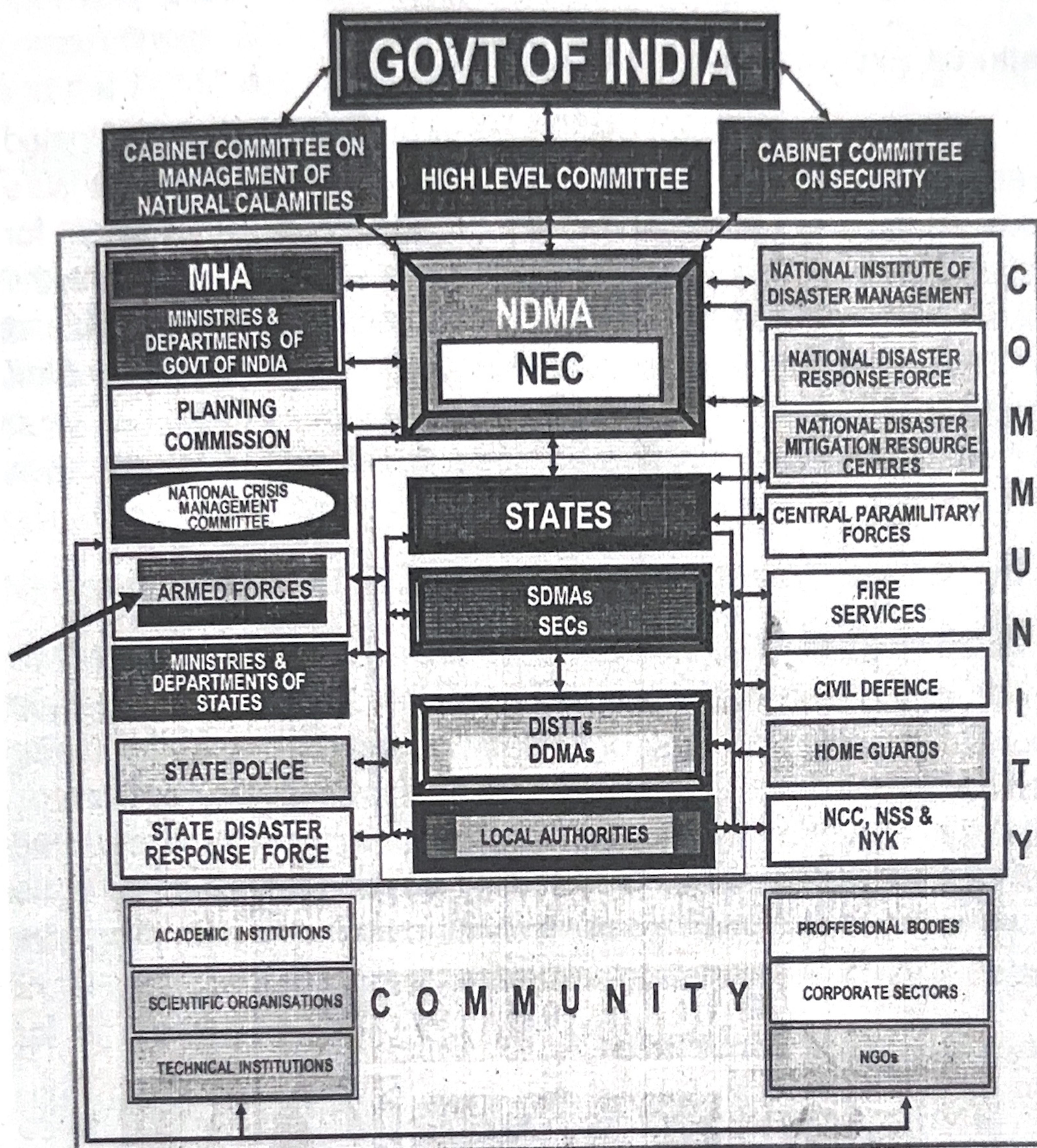
The Act provides for setting up of a National Disaster Management Authority under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, State Disaster Management Authorities under the Chairmanship of the Chief Ministers and District Disaster Management Authorities under the Chairmanship of District Magistrates. It also provides for constitution of a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and setting up of National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). The Act mandates for the constitution of the National Funds for Disaster Response and Disaster Mitigation and similar funds at the State and District levels. The Act also provides for specific role for Local Bodies in disaster management including Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as Urban Local Bodies like Municipalities. National Disaster Management Structure is shown in a diagrammatic form in Chart 1.

Mandate of NDMA

The NDMA, as the main body under the GoI, has the responsibility of laying down policies, plans and guidelines for DM and coordinating their enforcement and implementation for ensuring timely and effective response to disasters. The guidelines will assist the central ministries, departments and states to formulate their respective plans. It will approve the national plan prepared by the National Executive Committee (NEC) and plans of the central ministries and departments. It will take such other measures as it may consider necessary, for the prevention of disasters, or mitigation, or preparedness and capacity building, for dealing with threatening disaster situation or a disaster. To this end, it will be the responsibility of every central ministry or department to provide assistance to the NDMA and the state governments will also extend necessary cooperation and assistance. It will oversee the provision and application of funds for mitigation and preparedness measures. It has the power to authorise the departments or authorities concerned, to make emergency procurement of provisions or materials for rescue and relief in a threatening disaster situation or a disaster. It will also provide such support to other countries in times of disasters as may be determined by the Central Government. The general superintendence, direction and control

Chart 1

NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



- Notes: 1. This diagram reflects interactive linkages for synergised management of disasters and not a hierarchical structure.
2. Backward and forward linkages, especially at the functional level, are with a view to optimise efficiency.
3. Participation of the Community is a crucial factor.

of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are vested in and will be exercised by the Authority. The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) will work within the framework of broad policies and guidelines of the NDMA.

National Executive Committee (NEC)

NEC is the executive committee of the NDMA. It is mandated to assist the NDMA in the discharge of its functions and also ensure compliance of the directions issued by the Central Government for the purposes of DM. The NEC consists of 15 Secretaries to the Government of India of the relevant ministries and departments, and the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. One of the important functions assigned to the NEC is to coordinate the response in an event of any threatening disaster situation or a disaster.

State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)

At the State level, the SDMA, headed by the Chief Minister, will lay down policies and plans for DM in the state. It will, inter alia approve the state plan in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the NDMA, coordinate the implementation of the state plan, recommend provision of funds for mitigation and preparedness measures and review the developmental plans of different departments of the state to ensure integration of prevention, preparedness and mitigation measures.

State Executive Committee

The state government will constitute a State Executive Committee (SEC) to assist the SDMA in the performance of its functions. The SEC will be headed by the Chief Secretary of the state government and coordinate and monitor the implementation of the national policy, the national plan and the state plan. It shall also provide information to the NDMA relating to different aspects of DM.

District Disaster Management Authority

At the cutting edge level, the DDMA headed by the District Magistrate, with the elected representative of the local authority as the co-chairperson, will act as the planning, coordinating and implementing body for DM and take all necessary measures for the purposes of DM in the district in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the NDMA and SDMA. It will, inter alia prepare the

district DM plan including the response plan for the district, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the national policy, the state policy, the national plan, the state plan and the district plan and ensure that the guidelines for prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response measures laid down by the NDMA and the SDMA are followed by all departments of the government.

Local Authorities

These include Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Municipalities, District and Cantonment Boards and Town Planning Authorities for control and management of civic services. These bodies will ensure capacity building of their officers and employees in DM, carry out relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the affected areas and will prepare DM Plans in consonance with guidelines of the NDMA, SDMAs and DDMA.

National Institute of Disaster Management

As per the provisions of the Act, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) has to function within the broad policies and guidelines laid down by the NDMA. NIDM will be responsible for planning and promoting training, research, documentation and development of national level information base relating to disaster management policies, prevention mechanisms and mitigation measures. To ensure that the Institution becomes a Centre of Excellence for institutionalising training of trainers, a comprehensive set of guidelines have already been issued.

National Disaster Response Force

National Disaster Response Force has been constituted for specialist response to a threatening disaster situation or a disaster. The general superintendence, direction and control of this force shall be vested in and exercised by the NDMA. Presently, NDRF comprises eight battalions and the expansion of this force by another two to three battalions is under consideration. Seven of these battalions have been positioned at nine different locations in the Country based on the vulnerability profile. This force will be equipped with state-of-the-art equipment. NDRF units will maintain close liaison with the designated state governments and be available to them proactively, thus avoiding long procedural delays in deployment, in the event of any threatening disaster situation. Training of this Force for both man-made and natural disasters is

underway, including the NBC Scenarios. The outline organisations of a NDRF Battalion and a Typical Search and Research Team are shown at Charts 2 and 3 respectively.

National Disaster Mitigation Resource Centres

The concept of National Disaster Mitigation Resource Centres (NDMRCs) has been evolved to help the states in capacity development, running of mock drills and facilitating the process of central assistance to the states. These will be co-located with the NDRF battalions and set up at nine locations on a pilot basis.

A reserve of relief stores for 325,000 persons will be created at the national level, for use in the event of a disaster of a severe magnitude. These will include stores for 100,000 persons affected in high altitude areas. These reserves are intended to augment the resources of the states in case of major disasters and will be stored with the Mitigation Resource Centres.

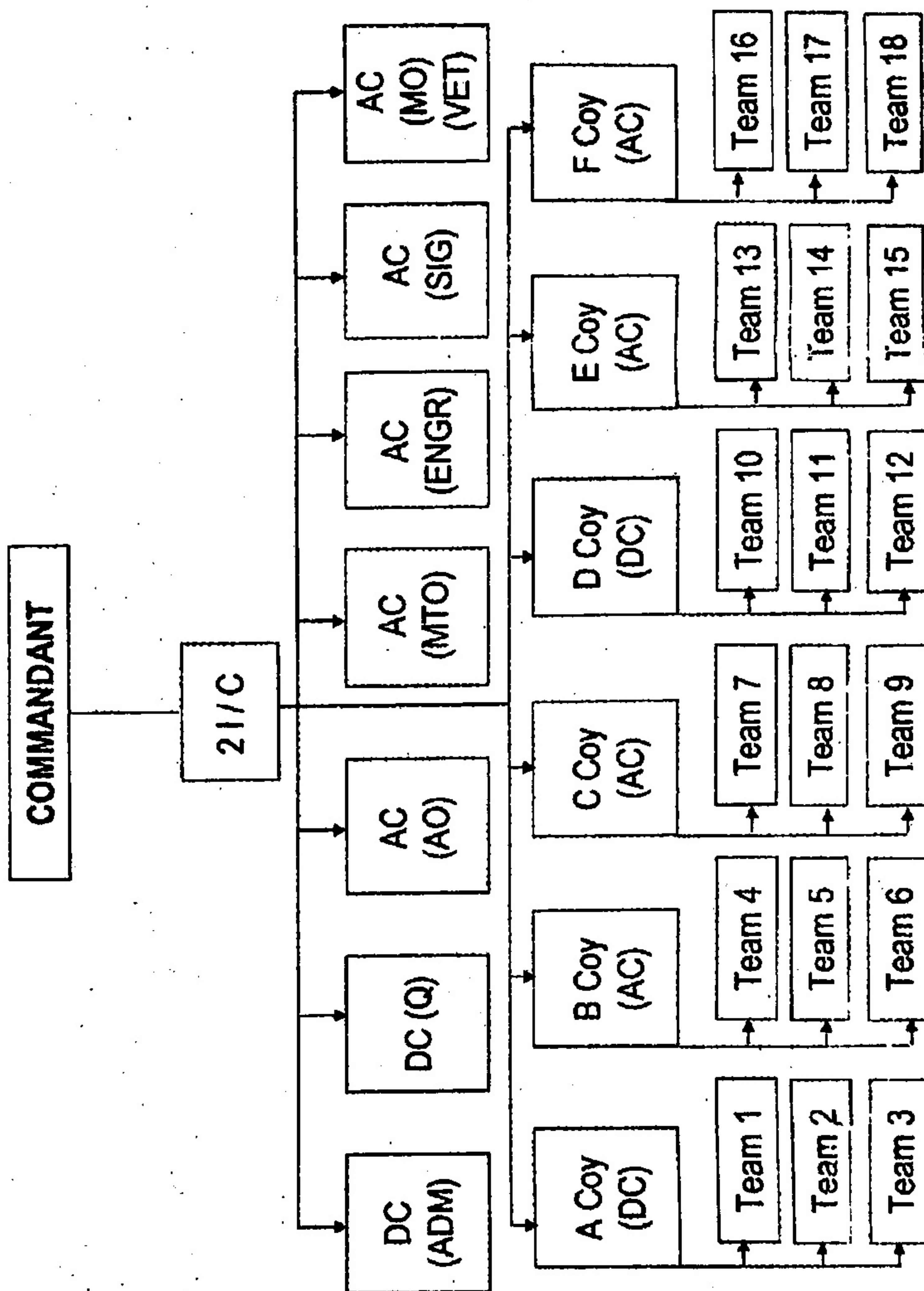
Role of the Armed Forces

Despite the creation of NDRF, the Armed Forces form the core of the Government's response capacity and have become the crucial immediate responders in all serious disaster situations. Due to their vast potential to meet any adverse challenge, speed of operational response, and the resources and capabilities at their disposal, the Armed Forces have historically played a major role in emergency support functions. These include communications, search and rescue operations, health and medical facilities, and transportation, especially in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The air and heli-lift movement for assistance to neighbouring countries primarily fall within the expertise and domain of the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces will also participate in imparting training to trainers and DM managers, especially in NBC aspects, heli-insertion, high altitude rescue, watermanship and training of paramedics.

At the national level, the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff has been included in the NEC. Director General of Military Operations, Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations) and Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Information Warfare & Operations) will also be invited to the NEC deliberations as often as required. Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Department of

Chart 2

ORGANISATION OF NDRF BATTALION

**Legend**

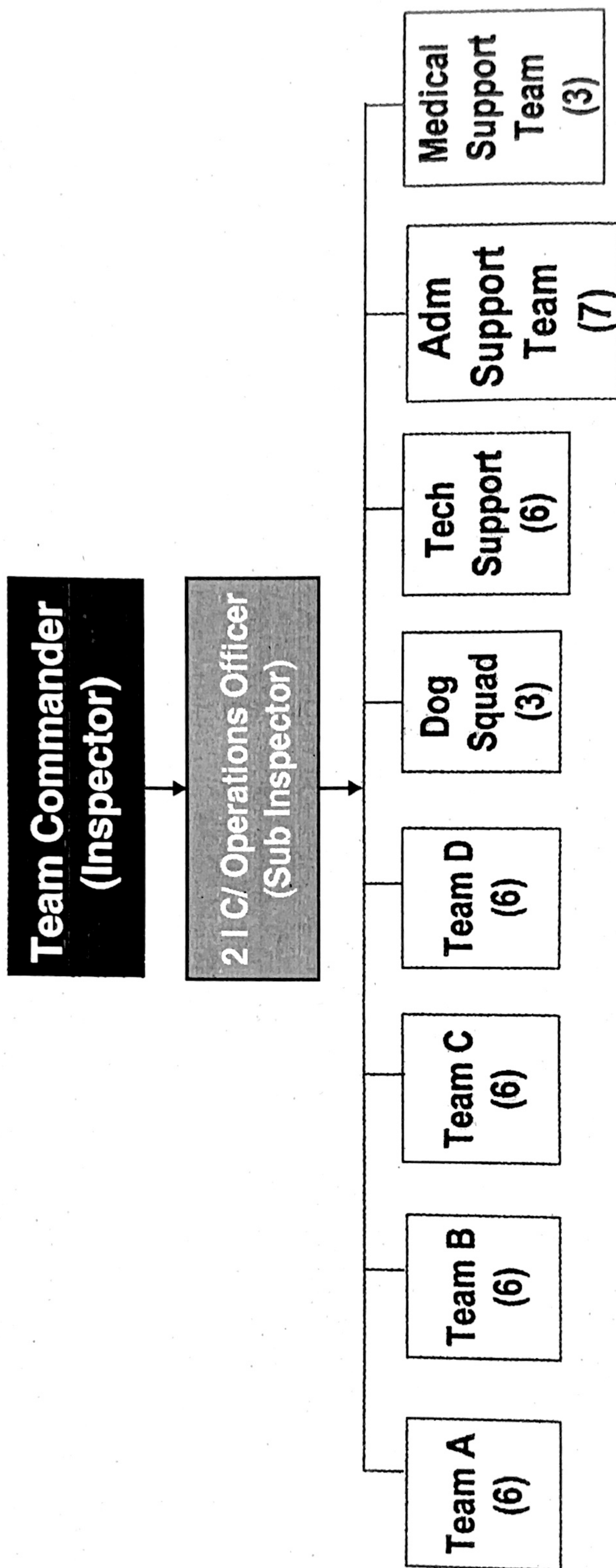
21C - Second-in-Command

DC - Deputy Commandant

AC - Assistant commandant

ORGANISATION OF A SPECIALISED SEARCH AND

RESCUE TEAM



Total – 45 Personnel

Training) has been included as a member of the Institute Body of the NIDM. Members from the Armed Forces have also been included in the Advisory Committee of the NDMA and form a part of the consultative process. Similarly, at the state and district levels, the local representatives of the Armed Forces will be included in their executive committees to ensure closer coordination and cooperation.

Major initiatives by the NDMA

Immediately after its constitution, the foremost challenge before the Authority was to lay down the National Policy on Disaster Management and disaster specific guidelines. The policy portrays a paradigm shift from erstwhile Response-Centric approach to the holistic management of disasters with emphasis on Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation. The Draft Policy document has been evolved through a participatory process taking on board the relevant suggestions and recommendations for it to be a truly defining document for our national endeavour to mainstream the disaster management as a national priority. The Guidelines on Earthquakes and Chemical (Industrial) Disasters have already been released. The guidelines on Preparation of State Plans, Floods, Nuclear Disasters, Medical Preparedness, Biological Hazards, Cyclones and Landslides are on the anvil and are likely to be released by the end of September 2007. Work has also commenced on preparation of guidelines for flooding in Urban Areas, Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM), Chemical Disasters (Terrorism), Micro Finance and Insurance.

Mitigation Projects

Giving due recognition to the paradigm shift in disaster management policy, planning of a number of mitigation projects has been initiated. National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP) in partnership with the World Bank has been revived which will cover all 13 cyclone prone states/ UTs. Other projects which are in the advance stage of planning are; National Disaster Mitigation Reserves for 3,25,000 personnel, Earthquake Risk Mitigation Project, Medical Preparedness, National Disaster Information and Communication Network and Floods. Studies have been initiated on Microzoning and Risk Analysis, and Vulnerability Mapping.

Mock Exercises

To inculcate culture of preparedness and reach out to the stakeholders at the cutting edge level, 23 scenario building exercises in the form of Table Top and Mock Exercises have been planned throughout the country in various types of disasters – earthquakes, cyclones, floods, fire and chemical (industrial) disasters. Eight table top and eight mock exercises have already been carried out. These mock exercises have generated tremendous interest and areas of emphasis for improving the response to various hazards in a holistic manner have been identified.

Awareness & Preparedness Campaigns

Awareness and Preparedness Campaigns are the key components of proactive policy on disaster management. Two focused campaigns on Earthquake and Cyclones have been initiated on the electronic and print media at the national as well as state levels. These campaigns have generated a lot of interest amongst the community and other stakeholders.

Reconstruction in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

One of the important activities undertaken by the NDMA during this period has been to oversee the Tsunami reconstruction activities in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Involvement of NDMA and a number of visits made by the Inter Ministerial Team and onsite coordination with various stakeholders has contributed immensely to accelerate the pace of reconstruction work in the Islands.

Conclusion

Our biggest challenge is to realise the national vision of building a safer and disaster resilient India by developing zero tolerance to avoidable deaths and minimal loss to property. We, as a Nation have to be more aware of our challenges and vulnerabilities, so that we are fully prepared to minimise the impact of futuristic disasters.