

Disaster Management at the National and State Levels

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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 (GoI)

The GoI 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 GoI 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.

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National Disaster Management Authority

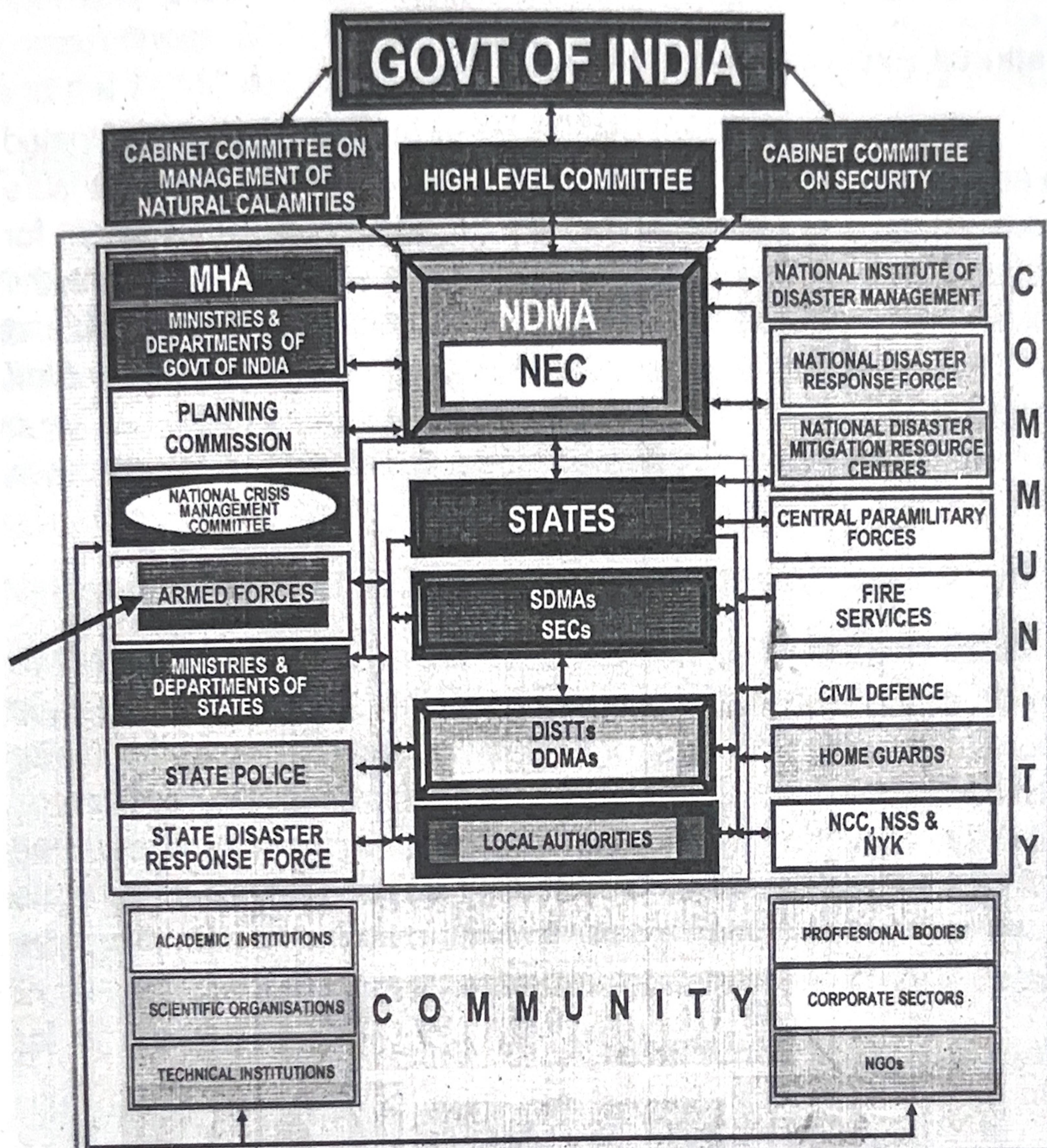
The Act provides for setting up of a National Disaster Management Authority under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, State Disaster Management Authorities under the Chairmanship of the Chief Ministers and District Disaster Management Authorities under the Chairmanship of District Magistrates. It 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 DDMAs.

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.

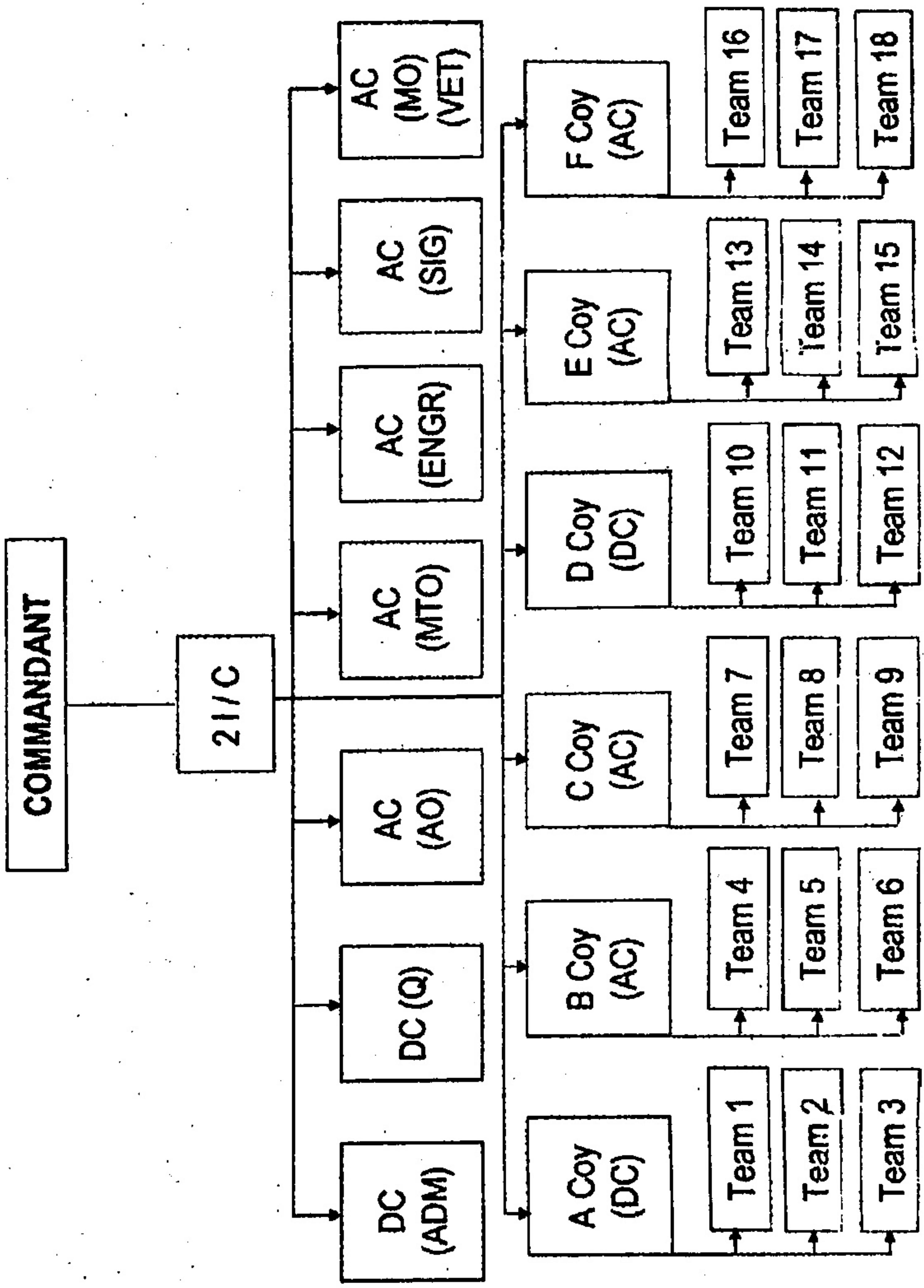
Role of the Armed Forces

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

ORGANISATION OF NDRF BATTALION

Chart 2



Legend

2IC - Second-in-Command

DC - Deputy Commandant

AC - Assistant commandant

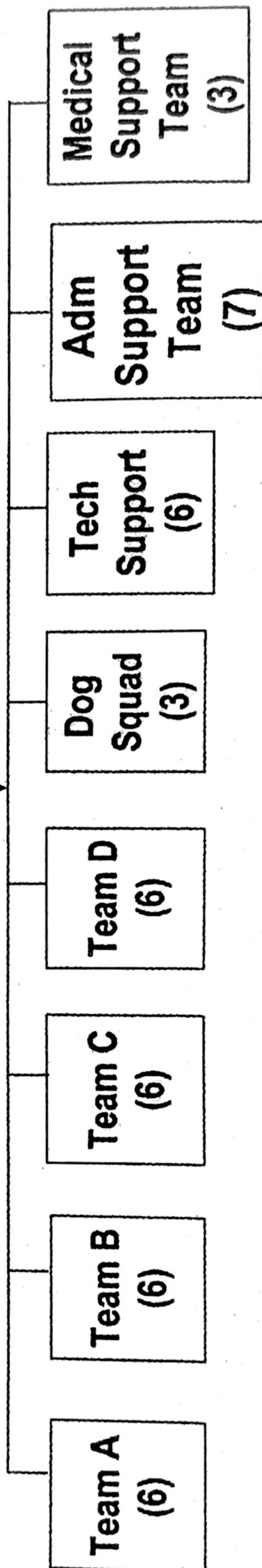
Chart 3

**ORGANISATION OF A SPECIALISED SEARCH AND
RESCUE TEAM**

RESCUE TEAM

**Team Commander
(Inspector)**

**21 C/ Operations Officer
(Sub Inspector)**



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.