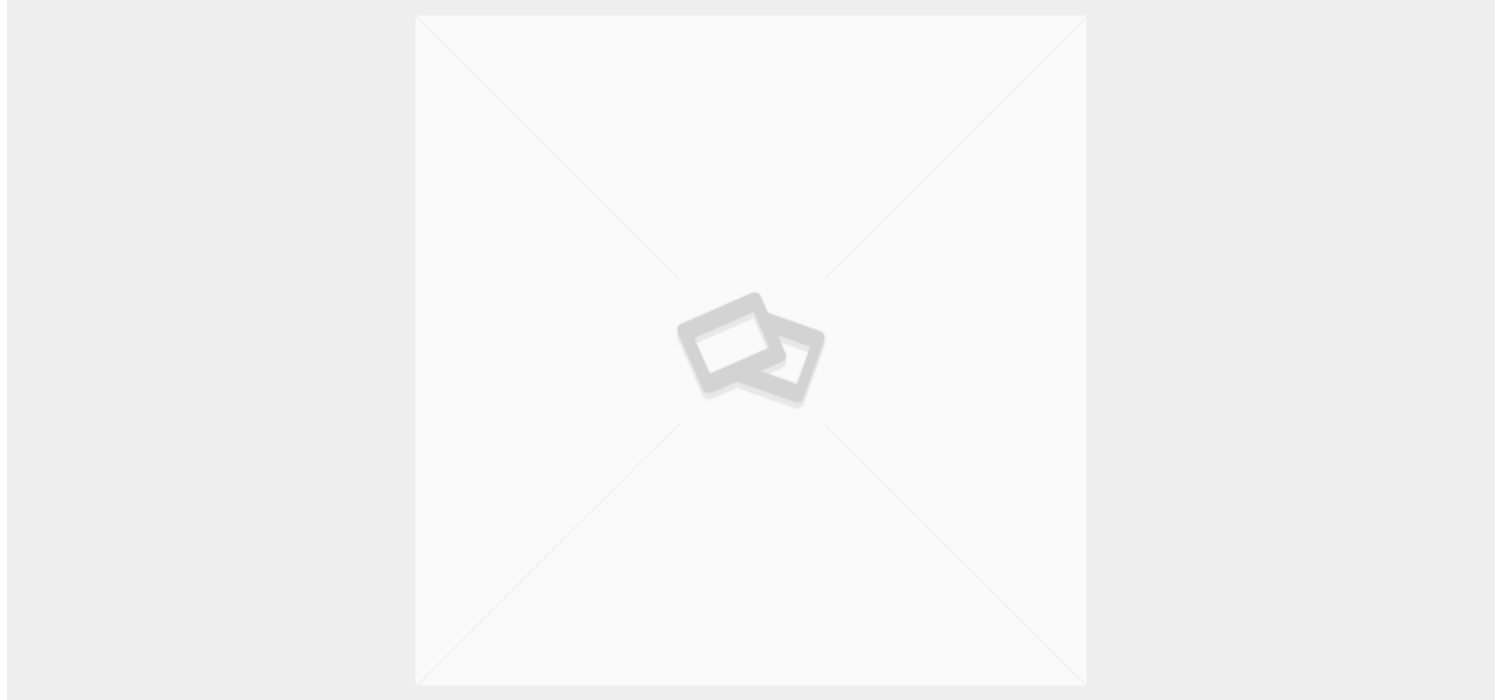


CREATE ADVISORY BODY TO STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AS PER DM ACT 2005

Posted on August 6, 2019 by Edmond



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Nani Palkhivala, India's then Ambassador to the United States of America during the emergency days reminded all Indians of what they did during the quest for Independence and the sacrifices made as one nation. He went on to say that, Indians gave themselves the Constitution but not the ability to keep it, Indians inherited a resplendent heritage but not the wisdom to cherish it, Indians suffer and endure in patience without the perception of their potential. By many interpretations, it can be viewed as true. In the year 2005, we formed for ourselves, the Disaster Management Act 2005, which became an Act of Parliament. Our country is marked by series of disasters every year, which leads to socio-economic losses beyond measure. Recently a United Nations report placed India on third position among the top five disaster-hit countries in 2015, which was also the hottest year on record due to climate change. India as a nation state lost Rs 22,000 crore in terms of economic damages and more than 2800 deaths.

While some global health advocates and policy makers might think that 2800 deaths are far too less a number to look into, let us recognize that when a massive disaster takes place, it will destroy everything that was built in all these decades. It will be a water-shed moment where the damages in

terms of GDP will be impossible to recover until the next half of a century. We will gift onto the next generation, a stolen future because of our incompetence and inability to draw inspiration from disaster preparedness and resilience which the spirit of the provisions under the Disaster Management Act 2005 provides for.

Section 17, Sub-section 1 & 2 talks about the provision to set up a state level advisory body to the state disaster management authority. Enlightened leadership is all states should set up the advisory body with immediate effect and not wait for court directions which looks awful from a leadership perspective. I would recommend the following measures for effective implementation

1. The advisory committee should meet every 4 months at the state capital and the agenda should be set by the Principal Secretary(Revenue) holding Disaster Management Portfolio. The meeting once in every 4 months will make it three times a year. Depending upon the agenda, it could be a day-long meeting too, with key deliverables addressed.
2. The committee should comprise of 9-11 members and should include Public Health experts, urban planners, social scientists, civil engineering professional and IT expert besides other government officials. 2-3 experts belonging to the state but residing outside India can also be considered so that global best practices can be brought for discussions and action.
3. Members of the committee should communicate any agenda for discussion well in advance before the next meeting. Best practices, front-line voices and felt needs with regard to preparedness, mitigation and resilience should be discussed, shared and put into practice.
4. The advisory body should be remunerated as per the provisions and their travel and stay taken care of.
5. The minutes of the meeting should be sent to all District Commissioners for implementation and progress report should be given.
6. Once a year the committee should meet with the Chief Minister and secretaries for related discussions which again should be facilitated by the Principal Secretary.
7. All state and district level drills should be communicated for the advisory members to participate if available well in advance.

While the objectives should be set by the Principal Secretary along with the team while forming the board, I would like to place some of the pertinent objectives which should be as follows:

- 1.To ensure the implementation of the state disaster management plan.
- 2.To oversee district level disaster plan and submit report in this regard to Principal Secretary.
- 3.To persuade schools and colleges and universities to compulsorily undertake disaster management drills and awareness raising sessions on a yearly basis.
- 4.All the members should be assigned responsibility of number of districts and they should focus on those districts.
5. All members should be permitted to independently ask institutions to conduct mock drills in the areas they belong too, with a copy marked to the Member Secretary, DDMA.

It is noted by the World Health Organization that India will lose 2,50,000 citizens due to climate

change which will cause malaria deaths and deaths from heat stress, diarrhoea and lead to disproportionate problems with regard to water and sanitation. The Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015 set up an excellent global guideline for all stakeholders. I believe caring for the country and protecting the state of the union for disaster requires far-sightedness. As living creatures, we are all dependent on one another. Protecting wet-lands, maintaining ecosystems, marine life, urban risk mitigation all need to be addressed. In the absence of a high level state advisory body, this commitment to the world and to India in particular seems lost. The deterioration of the environment and the society at large affects the most under-privileged sections in India and for their sake, we must awake. I would like to leave you with the words of Nelson Henderson, "The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit." Interpret it as widely as you could. Jai Hind.

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