

CHAPTER VI: LESSONS LEARNT AND SENSITIVITY TO ERROR SIGNALS

There were certain areas where the Government could have been more vigilant to the signals that it came across from time to time. Some such important signals are discussed below:

6.1 Trials or tests of District Control Rooms

Mention was made in para 3.3.9 of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended 31 March 2000, Government of Maharashtra that no trials and tests were conducted in the district control rooms and there was a risk of failure of these facilities at the time of a disaster. It was noticed in the test checked districts that there was no evidence of any such trials being conducted and reports thereof, highlighting the insensitivity.

Government accepted (September 2006) the facts. However, during monsoon 2006, after learning the lessons from monsoon-2005, the rehearsal of DMP was done by the Government in a more systematic manner by issuing GRs in May and June – 2006, for formation of District Disaster Management Authority, including appointment of Search and Rescue Teams.

6.2 Non-functional Warning Systems

As pointed out in the Chapter 2, in many cases warning systems were either not in place or were out of order during flood 2005.

Government accepted (September 2006) the facts and agreed to make improvement. The improvement, however, was not noticed as the VHF systems in Nanded and Sangli Districts were still found non-functional during subsequent floods 2006 and in Kolhapur, the system was not functional in three Talukas.

6.3 Mithi river issues

Notwithstanding recommendations made by CHITALE Committee and BRIMSTOWAD Report, the Mumbai City administration could not remove silt and evacuate the encroachers to widen the catchment area of the Mithi river. The Government has taken constructive action only after the flood was over and carried out widening and desiltation of Mithi River by claiming to have excavated silt of 757257 cubic meters before monsoon-2006. The outcome / authenticity of expenditure of Rs 39.96 crore incurred thereon by MMRDA could not be verified as proof of transportation and stack measurements of excavated silt dumped at dumping sites was not produced.

6.4 Monitoring water levels of reservoir

The model action plan for disaster preparedness for floods issued by the Government of India (1981) provide comprehensive guidelines for monitoring

water levels of reservoirs. Action on those lines would have avoided Almatti dam backwater effect faced by Sangli district. Government accepted (September 2006) the facts.

6.5 Commitment for improvement during flood 2006

The Government stated (September 2006) in exit conference that they have learnt the lesson from flood 2005 disaster and improved the preparedness during flood 2006 with the acknowledgement of contribution of audit in improving the system of distribution of assistance. The scrutiny of records in selected districts of floods-2006 disclosed the following:

Para No.	Subject in brief	Improvements / proposals reported in Exit conference	Action taken in the four districts selected for verification of these improvements
2.2.1	Rehearsal of Disaster Management plan	DMPS rehearsed before Flood 2006	Complied in selected district. Before monsoon 2006, the specific GRs for improving preparedness were issued and implemented in districts
2.2.2	Long Term Planning	On the lines of Mumbai city, such plans were also to be made for other districts	Not complied in selected districts. Though proposals claimed to have been prepared they were not finally approved by the Government
2.2.3	VHF sets	Government accepted non functioning of VHF sets in Maharashtra for want of AMCs	No further step taken since flood 2005. Neither the system was repaired nor replaced by new techniques.
3.1.2	Ex-gratia in death and missing cases.	Requirement of death certificate was not insisted due to urgency	Same position continued.
3.1.3	Observance of prescribed norms for selection of families for cash dole and grant of assistance in excess of loss	Due to urgency & public pressure norms were not observed	The same position still continued. In Nanded wrong beneficiaries got selected despite using photographs as part of Panchanamas
3.1.4	Distribution of food grains & Kerosene	Variations of families between cash assistance and assistance in kind accepted and agreed to improve	No improvement variations still continued. The GR issued in 2006 was ambiguous and assistance in kind was paid though cash dole was not paid in Gondia and Sangli districts.
3.1.12	Assistance for damaged houses	Accepted and agreed to take precautions while selecting beneficiaries as per norms.	Not complied. No improvement.
4.1.1	Drawl without requirement	Agreed to issue necessary orders for avoiding orders for avoiding such omission.	Orders not issued
5.1.1	Monthly reports	Accepted the facts and stated that position improved in flood 2006.	Complied in all selected districts.

5.1.2	Reservoir monitoring	Facts on Almati accepted and subsequently in 2006 better care was taken	Complied in selected districts. Position improved as the water levels in all the reservoirs were monitored.
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6.6 Blue Zone – houses/families

Since long, neither unauthorised residents living in blue zones / encroachment zone have been removed / resettled nor any responsibilities for permitting such dwellings been fixed. Moreover, the condition making residence in blue zone ineligible for relief assistance has also been removed from January 2006. This amounts to legalise their settlements in such areas.

6.7 Conclusion

Government of Maharashtra has learnt some lessons after Floods 2005. The response of the Government reflects attempts to improve preparedness as well as system delivery. The intended improvement is however yet to materialize fully. Verification of actions / proposals for improvement in 2006 also points to certain areas of concern like non-warning dissemination systems and continued deficiencies in identification of beneficiaries for relief assistance in cash and kind for which urgent corrective action is required.

These points were reported to Government (November 2006). Their reply has been incorporated at appropriate places.

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