

India-Russia Coordinated Action on DRR

India and Russia are collaborating more closely on various safety and security issues. This trend has recently included addressing disaster risk. The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) of India states that coordinated action among nations through the response and preparedness phases is central to the risk reduction process. In the coming years, India and Russia are planning on such coordinated action.

The Asian Regional Plan (ARP), as accepted at Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in Delhi, November 2016 also gives emphasis to such international cooperation in reducing disaster risks in Asia. ARP aims at effectively implementing Sendai Framework and represents the risk reduction priorities of Asian governments and stakeholders. The AMCDRR and ARP both underline the principles of shared responsibility and shared commitments towards the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

India and Russia first held joint talks on collaboration for catastrophe administration in 2010. A federal approach was deemed to be a strength. Since then, Russia has agreed to work with India to set up the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) in Delhi to handle disaster and other emergency situations in the country. This was agreed during a meeting between Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Russian Minister for Emergency Situations, Vladimir Puchkov in Moscow on 28th November, 2017. Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations, popularly known as EMERCON will participate in the formation of the NCMC in India.

According to the agreement, India's proposed NCMC will rely on a system similar to OKISON, which is Russia's complex system of monitoring and reporting alerts. Such a system is most suited for India's federal government set up.

India has long been committed to what Home Minister Rajnath Singh referred to at Sendai as "Collaborative Federalism" in implementing all disaster risk reduction plans. In concrete terms, "Collaborative Federalism" means the decentralization of response powers to the states, and transfer of financial resources, which will help the states fulfill their disaster related obligations. Moreover, it also implies the advancement of loans (in disaster situations) as a "productive principle", and deployment of armed forces (in emergencies) in the states. The NCMC will improve this collaborative federalism by improving inter-state and centre-state coordination.

EMERCOM's participation in setting up India's NCMC is especially significant. EMERCOM, established in January 1994 by the then President of Russia, Boris Yelstin, is an example of strong federal coordination for minimizing the adverse impacts of disasters and emergencies. It builds on the work of Russian Rescue Corps and addresses safety and security concerns effectively.

The two countries have also agreed to a program of training of experts and sharing of each other's best practices in the field of disaster risk reduction. A joint exercise may be conducted towards the end of 2018 or early 2019.

India's home minister and Nikolai Patrushev, secretary, Security Council of Russian Federation met in the last week of November to discuss the shared ways in which disaster risk and external threat overlap; and how can these be addressed simultaneously in a national response. During the meeting, the two sides reiterated their assurance to additionally reinforce their participation in disaster safety and the segments of security, including counter-terrorism.

Information is the key to unified and coordinated response to disaster risk and security concerns. Both India and Russia reviewed the implementation of the agreement on information security signed in October 2016.

Both sides value the progressing participation and exchange visits between the two National Security Councils of India and Russia.

In the coming years, Russia and India will continue to find ways to enhance the risk reduction and resilience building efforts especially related to Federative structure. Article 263 of the Constitution of India, encourages the states of India to coordinate and collaborate on various challenges.

Most importantly, India is aiming to achieve the outcomes of the Sendai Framework through its National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP). A risk reduction partnership with Russia will help India to implement the NDMP much more efficiently. Disaster resilience and preparedness achieved through such a partnership will help India in achieving greater economic prosperity and stability to emerge as a regional and global leader. ■ - Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI