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**4-day-long BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise – 2017 concludes**

**India has emerged as a frontline state for Disaster Risk Reduction: Dr Jitendra Singh**

The first Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, Disaster Management Exercise (BIMSTEC DMEx-2017) concluded here today. Members of the BIMSTEC i.e Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal participated in the four-day exercise, conducted by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as the nodal agency in Delhi and the National Capital Region, which comprised of a Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercises (FTXs) on Earthquake and Flood and an After Action Review (AAR).

Today, debriefing and 'After Action Review' (AAR) was conducted to share the important lessons learnt which would assist the countries to augment disaster response and coordination.

During the exercise conducted from October 10-13, 2017 various important suggestions/actions viz, Participation of women in Disaster Response Mechanism, Emphasise on psycho-social-trauma care, replication of ICS, Gender consideration during evacuation and rehabilitation, Utility of Civil Military Coordination Centre, Religious aid to motivate the affected people, Importance of maintaining Law & Order in the affected area to avoid human trafficking and other post-disaster crimes were shared by the participants.

Addressing the participants at the Valedictory Session, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said that India has emerged as a frontline state for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). He said natural disasters know no manmade boundaries and hence countries will have to come together at global and regional levels. The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's 10-point agenda on DRR could be the focal point to take us forward, he added.

Dr Jitendra Singh said India has pioneered the use of space applications and imaging in DRR and we have been able to reduce the loss of lives considerably. He said the Prime Minister himself personally micro-managed rescue and relief efforts during the 2014 Kashmir floods and also monitored the flood rescue and relief efforts in Assam, Bihar and Gujarat this year.

Dr Jitendra Singh said such exercise provides a platform for sharing the best practices, methodology and response mechanism amongst the BIMSTEC member nations in the field of Disaster Management. He appreciated the commendable role played by NDRF as a lead Agency in conducting this First BIMSTEC DMEx-2017 successfully. He emphasized the need of better coordination, cooperation and sharing of best practices for

effective disaster management in the region. Forums like this are opportunities to share and learn from each other's experience, he added.

Shri Sanjay Kumar, Director General NDRF quoted that during the informal consultations at the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat held in Goa (India) on October 16, 2016, the leaders agreed to undertake BIMSTEC Annual Disaster Management Exercise. Further, during BIMSTEC senior officials' meeting in Kathmandu (Nepal) on Feb 7, 2017, India offered to host the first BIMSTEC Annual Disaster Management Exercise. Accordingly, the concept of first BIMSTEC DMEx was conceived and NDRF was entrusted to plan and conduct this first exercise as a lead agency. DG, NDRF thanked all the delegates and their team members for their active participation in the exercise & hoped that this Exercise would go a long way in formulating an effective disaster response mechanism among the BIMSTEC member nations. Further he added that it is very reassuring to be a witness to the progress made by all the countries in the region towards disaster preparedness in general and disaster response, in particular.

Shri Prashant Agrawal, Joint Secretary, MEA (BIMSTEC & SAARC) and Shri R K Jain, Member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) also addressed during the valedictory session. They appreciated the active participation of rescue teams from all the BIMSTEC member countries and thanked organisers for successfully organizing of this mega event.

The four-day-long exercise was inaugurated by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh on October 10, 2017.

All the delegates appreciated the efforts of Govt. of India and BIMSTEC Secretariat. The delegates were impressed by the efforts of NDRF in hosting this mega event.

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