

The Times of India, Mumbai, 18 Jan 2008

## Centre finally wakes up to flood reality

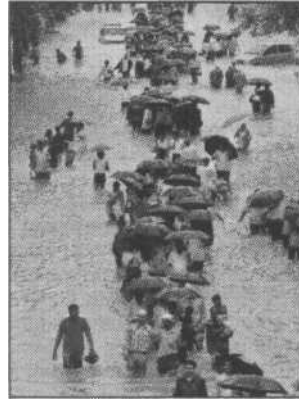
Plans To Spend Rs 8,000 Cr To Reduce Losses

**New Delhi:** With the country on an average losing 1,600 lives and Rs 1,800 crore worth of property, including crops, annually due to floods, the Centre has proposed to pump in Rs 8,000 crore in the 11th Five-Year Plan to assist states in the execution of flood management works.

Besides, another scheme—costing Rs 1,500 crore—to take up river management works in border areas and critical flood management works in the Brahmaputra and Barak river basins are also in the process of approval. Union water resources minister Saifuddin Soz said on Thursday while releasing the National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) guidelines for "Management of Floods".

The guidelines, identifying 13 key areas of flood management, including suggestions for flood insurance scheme and flood plain zoning, will be taken up eventually by the concerned central ministries and state governments for implementation in a phased manner.

The introduction of a special insurance scheme in flood-prone areas will help in providing compensation for loss of life and property while zon-



- Another Rs 1,500 crore project proposed for river management in border areas

- 13 key areas, including special insurance and flood plain zoning, identified

- Defence installations, public utilities and industries to be located on high ground

- Legislation on zoning likely, states to be asked to implement it by March 2009

ing will ensure safety of buildings and utility services in different areas.

As per the guidelines, while defence installations, industries, public utilities like hospitals, electricity installations, telephone exchanges and rail-

way stations will come up in areas of maximum observed flood levels (the highest plain), parks and playgrounds could be located in areas vulnerable to frequent floods in the particular city, town or village.

The NDMA has also mentioned bringing suitable legislation for flood plain zoning and highlighted a cut-off date (March 2009) by which all states are expected to enact and enforce appropriate laws.

Preparation of flood risk maps, expansion and modernization of flood forecasting and warning services to all flood prone rivers and rivulets, time-bound implementation of structural measures for prevention of flooding, erosion and drainage congestion and construction of flood shelters are points which have found a prominent place in the norms. NDMA has also sought better coordination among states to implement these guidelines.

Secretary, ministry of water resources, Gauri Chatterjee, later said that the government had already proposed setting up a 'National Flood Management Commission' which could undertake coordination and synergy required for better flood management measures that would transcend state boundaries.