



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are the **District Collector** of a coastal district. A severe cyclone is expected to make landfall in your district within 48 hours. The meteorological department has issued a red alert, warning of wind speeds up to 150 km/h, heavy rainfall, and potential storm surges.

Your district has a population of about 5 lakh people, with 2 lakh living in low-lying coastal areas at high risk of flooding. The district has limited evacuation centers, and moving such a large number of people on short notice poses significant logistical challenges. The district hospital is located in a low-lying area and houses 200 patients, including 50 in the ICU. Moving them would be risky and time-consuming.

Additionally, there's a large fishing community that is reluctant to leave their boats and homes, as they fear looting in their absence. Many of them also doubt the severity of the weather forecast, based on past experiences where cyclone warnings didn't materialize into major events.

Questions:

1. Who are the key stakeholders involved in this case?
2. What immediate course of action will you take to ensure the safety and evacuation of the population, particularly those in high-risk areas?
3. What long-term measures can be implemented to improve disaster preparedness and resilience in your coastal district?

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Introduction

The **District Collector** of a coastal district is facing a severe cyclone expected to make landfall within 48 hours, with warnings of 150 km/h winds, heavy rainfall, and storm surges. The district, home to 5 lakh people, has **2 lakh in high-risk coastal areas**, posing logistical challenges for evacuation due to limited centers.

- Effective coordination and swift action are crucial to ensure public safety.

Body

1. Who are the key stakeholders involved in this case?

Stakeholder Group	Role/Responsibility
District Administration (including District Collector)	Overall coordination, decision-making, and implementation of evacuation and emergency measures
Meteorological Department	Providing weather forecasts, updates, and warnings.

Local Police	Maintaining law and order, assisting with evacuations, and preventing looting.
Health Department	Managing healthcare facilities, ensuring patient safety, and coordinating medical evacuations if needed.
District Hospital Staff	Caring for patients, especially those in critical condition, and preparing for potential emergency evacuations.
Fire and Rescue Services	Conducting rescue operations, clearing debris, and assisting with evacuations
National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)	Providing specialized support for search and rescue operations, and disaster management.
Local Government Officials	Coordinating with communities, providing local insights, and assisting with logistics.
Community Leaders	Communicating with residents, especially those in vulnerable areas, and encouraging compliance with evacuation orders.
Fishing Community	Protecting their boats and homes, and coordinating their evacuation or securing their assets.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Providing additional support, resources, and relief supplies to affected populations.
Media	Broadcasting warnings, updates, and emergency information to the public.
Utility Services (Water, Electricity, etc.)	Ensuring the safety and continuity of essential services and quick restoration in case of damage.
Transportation Services	Providing vehicles and logistical support for evacuation efforts.
Volunteers	Assisting with various tasks such as evacuation, distribution of relief materials, and providing support to responders.

2. What immediate course of action will you take to ensure the safety and evacuation of the population, particularly those in high-risk areas?

▪ **Immediate Emergency Response Activation:**

- Convene an emergency meeting with all key officials and stakeholders
- Activate the **District Disaster Management Plan according to the NDMA guidelines on cyclones.**
- Establish a **24/7 control room** for coordinating all activities
- Request additional resources and support from the state government

▪ **Evacuation Strategy:**

- **Priority Evacuation Zones:** Identify and prioritize the most vulnerable 2 lakh people in low-lying coastal areas
 - Map out safe evacuation routes and designate pickup points
- **Evacuation Centers:** Identify and prepare all available government buildings, schools, and community halls as evacuation centers.
 - Coordinate with neighboring districts for additional shelter capacity
 - Ensure basic amenities (**food, water, sanitation**) at all centers
- **Transportation:** Mobilize all available government **vehicles, buses, and boats for evacuation.**

- Coordinate with private transportation providers for additional support
- Establish a clear schedule and system for evacuation transportation.
- **Hospital and Medical Preparedness:** Assess the structural integrity of the district hospital.
 - **If evacuation is necessary:**
 - Coordinate with **nearby hospitals and medical facilities for patient transfer**
 - Prioritize moving ICU patients with specialized medical teams and equipment
 - Ensure continuity of care during and after relocation
 - **If evacuation is not feasible:**
 - Strengthen the hospital structure with sandbags and other reinforcements
 - Ensure backup power supply and essential medical supplies
 - Station rescue teams nearby for immediate post-cyclone support
- **Fishing Community Engagement:** Engaging community leaders and local officials for direct communication.
 - Provide concrete evidence of the cyclone's severity (**satellite images**, expert briefings) to the community and accelerate evacuation.
 - Implement strict security measures in evacuated areas to prevent looting
 - Consider legal measures if necessary to enforce evacuation
- **Public Communication and Awareness:** Utilize all available media channels (**TV, radio, social media, SMS**) for constant updates.
 - Deploy vehicles with loudspeakers in vulnerable areas.
 - Address skepticism by sharing scientific data and emphasizing the unusual severity of the approaching cyclone
- **Critical Infrastructure Protection:** Secure power stations, water treatment plants, and communication towers.
 - Coordinate with relevant departments for quick **post-cyclone restoration** of services
- **Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Maintain constant communication with the meteorological department.
 - Be prepared to modify plans **based on changing cyclone trajectory or intensity.**

3. What long-term measures can be implemented to improve disaster preparedness and resilience in your coastal district?

▪ **Infrastructure Development:**

- **Upgrading Evacuation Centers:** Increasing the capacity and improving the living conditions of existing evacuation centers.
 - Exploring alternative evacuation facilities like **schools, community halls, and public buildings** located on higher ground.
- **Building Seawalls and Breakwaters:** Investing in coastal protection infrastructure like **seawalls and breakwaters** to mitigate the impact of storm surges and flooding in high-risk areas.
- **Fortifying Critical Infrastructure:** Elevating or relocating critical infrastructure like the district hospitals to areas less prone to flooding and storm surges.

▪ **Community Engagement and Capacity Building:**

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting regular public awareness campaigns regarding disaster preparedness, educating residents on cyclone risks, **early warning signs, evacuation procedures**, and safety measures.
- **Community Disaster Management Committees:** Establishing and empowering community-based disaster management committees with trained volunteers.
 - These committees would play a crucial role in **disseminating information, organizing mock drills, and assisting in evacuations.**
- **Livelihood Diversification:** Encouraging the fishing community to diversify their livelihoods beyond fishing, **reducing their dependence on boats during disasters.**
 - This could involve training programs in **aquaculture, carpentry, or small businesses.**

▪ **Improved Communication and Planning:**

- **Early Warning Systems:** Investing in robust early warning systems that utilize various communication channels like **sirens, SMS alerts, and local media** to ensure timely warnings reach every resident.
- **Evacuation Plans:** Develop comprehensive evacuation plans with **clear routes, designated assembly points**, and transportation arrangements for vulnerable populations.
- **Inventory and Resource Management:** Maintain a detailed inventory of essential supplies like food, water, medicine, and building materials.
 - Establish **partnerships with NGOs** and private companies for additional resources during disasters.

▪ **Addressing Local Concerns:**

- **Community Policing:** To address the fishing community's concerns about looting, implement community policing programs and **neighborhood watch initiatives during disaster evacuations**.
- **Historical Data Analysis:** Partner with meteorological departments to analyze historical data and improve the accuracy of weather forecasts. This can help build trust in future warnings.

Conclusion

The approaching cyclone presents a critical opportunity. By implementing the proposed measures, the district can build resilience for future threats. This proactive approach **saves lives, minimizes damage, and fosters a swift recovery**. Most importantly, it empowers the community to become active participants in their own safety. This shift from **reactive to proactive disaster management** will ensure a more secure future for the coastal district.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/mains-practice-question/question-8341/pnt>

