

Afghan Secretary General Visits IRCS

The Secretary General of the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society, Mr. Mohammed Naim Dindar, visited the Indian Red Cross Society on 4th February 2016. He was accompanied by two senior colleagues of the national society on the tour.

Joint Secretary of the Indian Red Cross Society, Dr Veer Bhushan welcomed Mr Dindar and his team. He recalled the long friendly relations between the two national societies and the previous dialogues with each other in the recent past. A presentation was also made to inform him about the programs and activities of the IRCS. The highlight of the meeting was the discussion of ideas of mutual interest and the areas of future cooperation. The IRCS offered ARCS the services of the Central Training Institute, Bahadurgarh, Haryana and opportunities to include ARCS staff and volunteers for its training programs.



Mr. Mohammed Naim Dindar thanked Dr. Veer Bhushan for hosting ARCS delegation and offers of partnership. He visited the Disaster Management center and appreciated the courses being run there. He also conveyed his condolences on the sad demise of the Secretary General, Dr. S.P. Agarwal.

Managing Body Meeting



As per the IRCS Act XV of 1920 the Managing Body elects from amongst itself a Vice Chairman after it is reconstitution. Accordingly the members of the Managing Body elected Sri Avinash Rai Khanna, a presidential nominee on the board, as it Vice Chairman.

All statutory subjects and other important matters were placed before the Managing Body for its consideration. IRCS' responses to various disasters, health and other programs, annual accounts, annual budget, annual report and all important expenses during the interim period were reported and got approved by the apex body.



Shri J.P. Nadda, Hon'ble Chairman, Indian Red Cross Society & Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India chaired the first meeting of the Managing Body after it was reconstituted. Now the Body in full strength as all 12 elected members have been joined by the 6 Presidential nominees.

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Review of Activities
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From the desk of Joint Secretary

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Hon'ble Chairman Sri J P Nadda, Minister for Health & Family Welfare visited the National Headquarters to chair the Managing Body meeting held on 29 March.

From the Desk of Joint Secretary

The last quarter of the Indian Red Cross Society has been eventful. The programs for the period January to December 2015 were successfully implemented. Our partners, such as the ICRC, IFRC and partner national societies had provided financial as well as some technical support in the execution of the activities. These have been primarily implemented by the branches and obtaining the financial and narrative reports and their collation was quite a task.

We reviewed our First Medical Responders, Family News Services, TB and other programs in which branch secretaries and program coordinators participated. IRCS has also been successful in forging a new alliance with IIT Mandi to ensure closer interactions with such academic institutions to test and adopt best practices in disaster management, climate change adaptation and environmental management & restoration and provide early warning to our vulnerable communities.



FMR: OPENING NEW VISTAS

IRCS National Headquarters hosted a one day review meeting on 23 February 2016 to assess the highly successful on-going "First Medical Responders" (FMR) programme. Secretaries of 18 IRCS state branches, representatives of Ministry's of Home and Drinking Water & Sanitation, Deputy Commissioner Mandi (Himachal Pradesh), Heads of the ICRC Regional Delegation & IFRC Cluster National Societies, senior officers of the IFRC, ICRC and IRCS and DM Coordinators from the programme states participated. The programme was presided over by Mr Kamal Kishore, Member NDMA.

Dr Veer Bhushan, Joint Secretary IRCS welcomed the guests and participants. He also made a presentation on the key features of the FMR, the achievements and future plans. He also presented the outlines of the programme for 2016 and said, "Now, Climate Change, solid waste management and newer emerging threats to the community shall also find space in the training module."

In his keynote address Mr Kamal Kishore, member NDMA desired Red Cross to be a part of the disaster management plan of all districts. "Red Cross, local administration and well funded national plans, such as search & rescue; Swachh Bharat, peer to peer; should converge for the benefit of the community, he added. He also informed, "Studies reveal that success rate of search & rescue by local people is many times more that those done by outside agencies."

Keeping in mind diverse geographic, economic & other attributes and country's vulnerability to all kinds of disasters, IRCS, in 2011, rolled out First Medical Responders (FMR) programme with the prime motive to empower local community to respond effectively in times of any contingency in their respective regions. The project is now extended to 18 disaster prone states/ UTs in the country.

The programme seeks to impart skills to RC volunteers and after a period of mentoring proposes to hand over the teams to the district administration as a trained cadre to be utilised by them in the developmental programmes as well as during disasters. The FMRs have been able to demonstrate their usefulness in the disasters in Uttarakhand, J&K floods, Odisha cyclone Phailin, Tamil Nadu floods and on several other occasions.

The FMRs are IRCS volunteers who through a series of training programmes are empowered to respond at the times of disasters and other public health emergencies till expert help arrives.

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North East India Rocked



A powerful 6.7 magnitude earthquake, rocked remote north-eastern regions of India before dawn on 4 January 2016 at 4:35 am while many people were still in bed. The epicenter of the quake was in Nune village in Tamenglong district of Manipur state about 40 kms from the capital Imphal. Frightened people rushed into the streets in the darkness.

Indian Red Cross Society staff and volunteers, including the First Medical Responders, in coordination with public authorities, helped evacuate injured people from damaged buildings, gave first aid and are now assessing what other help is needed.

Dr. Y. Mohen Singh, the secretary of the Manipur state branch of the Indian Red Cross Society, helped evacuate injured people from a market in Imphal. About sixty houses had collapsed at the epicenter and another ten in the capital city. The quake killed more than eight people and injured more than 100.

Unfortunately many people were injured by falling debris so the volunteers recommended staying away from buildings if there were aftershocks. They also advised people not to stay in their own houses if the houses are badly damaged.

Indian Red Cross Society NHQ sent tents and kitchen sets to Manipur from its warehouses in Kolkata and Guwahati. A Water Purification Unit with an hourly output of 3000 liters was also sent for deployment.

Austrian Secretary General at NHQ



The Secretary General of the Austrian Red Cross, Dr. Werner Kerschbaum, visited the IRCS National Headquarters on 15 February 2016. Senior IRCS officials joined the Joint Secretary, Dr. Veer Bhushan, in a meeting organized in his honour.

Dr. Veer Bhushan, Indian Red Cross Society Joint Secretary, informed Dr. Werner about the activities of the Society with emphasis on three programs i.e. First Aid training, TB control and First Medical Responders (FMR).

He proposed collaboration with the Austrian Red Cross in setting up a "First Aid Centre of Excellence" at the Central Training Institute, Bahadurgarh. "State of art standardized quality training in first aid is needed in India and it is a priority for IRCS. The manual is ready, now we need to execute it", added Dr. Bhushan.

Dr. Werner appreciated the IRCS endeavors and showed interest in the implementation of the IRCS First Aid Training Project. He also informed about the main activities of the Austrian Red Cross. He shared the highly successful "Online Volunteering Project" of his national society that is being promoted by one of their radio stations. "The national society is getting a large number of volunteers through this medium and we shall be happy to share the project with the IRCS", he added.

FMR: opening new vistas

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IRCS has identified a key set of skills, which volunteers must possess in order to act as FMRs in times of disaster and emergency. The programme is designed to build capacity locally, throughout India, with the logic applied being that communities themselves will always be best placed to respond to local emergencies.

The volunteers are trained in different aspects of disaster preparedness such as emergency first aid, public health in emergencies, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, psychosocial support, restoring family links, management of dead bodies.

As of now FMR volunteer strength consists of 62 master trainers, 441 state level instructor trainers and 7228 trained volunteers.



Kerala Fire Response



The Indian Red Cross Society Kerala state branch First Medical Responders (FMRs) and volunteers were handy during the 10 April fire tragedy at Puttingle temple in Kollam when a projectile from a lit-up cracker made its way to the storage room and ignited a huge volume of fire crackers. 116 people were killed and over a hundred injured in the fire that broke during the temple festivities.

In the year 2016 only, the state branch launched its ambitious program to train at least 50 FMRs in each taluka of the state for disaster response as well as to support the developmental activities in the state. The Quilon District Branch team of 10 Red Cross volunteers and 3 FMR cadres were on the spot at 5.30 AM. The Trivandrum District Branch also deployed Volunteers from its Varkala Taluk branch. Red Cross Ambulances from Trivandrum, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam Districts were also pressed into service. The FMR team immediately started triage and first aid. The volunteers also got into search of scattered body parts. Meanwhile, a second team of 5 FMRs from the nearby Pathanamthitta and Kottayam Districts, and volunteers were rushed to the Quilon District Hospital where about half of the victims were taken for treatment. While volunteers were engaged in identifying and comforting the victims, FMRs were used by the hospital authorities for managing and transporting the dead bodies. Three FMRs were assigned to the Medical College Hospital, Trivandrum.

Shri J P Nadda, the Hon'ble Union Minister for Health and IRCS Chairman appreciated Kerala branch's efforts.

Health Promotion Course, 19 Batch Started

The Indian Red Cross Society national headquarters admitted participants for the popular course, "Health Promotion through Ayurveda & Yoga". The classes of the 19th batch were started on 17th March, 2016. Whenever a new batch is announced, in the news papers and the website, there is a beeline of applicants seeking admission to the course.

The course is run twice a week in the evening from 6-8 pm. Along with theoretical period, yogic exercises are also taught to the course participants.



IRCS and IIT Mandi Sign MoU

IRCS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Mandi in March 2016. Speaking on the subject Joint Secretary of the society Dr. Veer Bhushan said, "This is historic when IRCS has entered into an understanding with a premiere educational institute to evaluate and conduct impact analysis of IRCS programs being implemented by the Himachal state branch. IIT Mandi shall also utilize the community reach of the FMR Volunteers of the IRCS to reach out to the rural community of HP and bring to them the various innovative approaches developed by IIT Mandi in the field of disaster risk reduction, climate change, environmental restoration and management as well as eco system based livelihood development."

IIT Mandi and IRCS officials have been in regular communication over last several months to work out the modalities on the working relationship.

Tamil Nadu

Day Care Hospital

In the month of February 2016, the day care hospital of the state branch treated about 3000 patients which included visitors along with general medicine, dentistry, ENT, neurology, orthopaedics etc. The diagnostic laboratory conducted 241 tests and in the medical camps 265 people were treated.

Blood Services

The state branch blood bank conducted 18 blood donation camps in the month of February and March in which 1496 units of blood was collected. The centre conducted 22 blood grouping tests and issued 196 units of blood to hospitals. The Blood Bank also prepared 2526 units of blood components in the month.

Visitors

The floods in the state in the months of November and December evoked response from all kinds of donors from all over, including from out side the country.

The IRCS NHQ Joint Secretary, the IFRC officials and staff/volunteers of the Singapore Red Cross visited the state to assess the needs and review the relief work. The visiting people also participated in relief distribution.

Review meetings and field visits were organised in which representatives of the donor organisations such as, European Commission, IFRC, Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection and the state branch and district branch officials participated.

Other Activities

The IRCS branches in Tamil Nadu run 151 hearse vans. These vans transported 7882 dead bodies in the state primarily from hospitals in the month of March. Chennai alone handled 1555 such requests.

The Chairman, Dr Harish L Metha; the General Secretary, Mr MSM Nasiruddin; Administrative Secretary, Mr AK Narayanan and others of the Tamil Nadu state branch were given Certificate of Appreciation by the Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr C Vijayabaskar for their yeomen services during the floods of November and December 2016.

Tamil Nadu Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram

The Government of India launched Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram is being executed by the IRCS Tamil Nadu state branch since 2013. The 32 drop back ve-



hicles transported 3336 mothers with babies in March 2016. From inception, when there were only 5 drop vehicles to the present fleet of 31 vehicles 46443 mothers and babies have been transported.

STATUTORY MEETINGS IN GENEVA

Dr. Veer Bhushan, Joint Secretary and Mr. Manish Choudhary, Deputy Secretary, IRCS attended the General Assembly, Council of Delegates and the Diplomatic Conference of the Red Cross movement held during the first fortnight of December 2015. IRCS pledged to participate in the One Billion Coalition goals of the IFRC.

The One Billion Coalition is a transformative initiative to scale-up community and civic action to strengthen individual and community capacity to thrive in the face of adversity. The goal is that by 2025, at least one billion people around the world will have taken active steps to become safer, healthier, and more prosperous.

Assam State Branch: Reminiscences



Mother Teresa, given the title of a saint, and one of the noblest human beings of our times, was associated with Red Cross. She had stayed at the Red Cross hospital, Chandmari, Guwahati way back in the year 1978 from 22-24 June. She launched the activities of "Missionaries of Charity", from here and opened

the "Dying Destitute Home Project" at Bharalumukh, Guwahati.

Assam has traditionally been one of the most flood prone states in India. Based on the assessments of Indian and foreign experts it was decided that raised platforms be created with basic amenities to save people in times of flooding. The first ever raised platform in Asia was raised in the year 2002 in Pandula, Nalbari district. It measured 28,800 sq.ft.

This was found to be a very successful experiment. Hence, in subsequent years more such platforms were created, such as at Chorabari, Kamrup and Bhoragaon in Morigaon district. Below are the pictures of the launching off of the projects from state archives.

