

Report

UGC Sponsored National Seminar on Disaster Management and Preparedness

(Geomatics and Socio-Economic Issues)

The Centre for Remote Sensing and Department of Economics, Bharathidasan University jointly organized an UGC Sponsored National Seminar on “Disaster Management and Preparedness (Geomatics and Socio-Economic Issues) on 24th February, 2016. The first session was chaired by Dr. D. Ramesh, Director, Centre for Remote Sensing, Bharathidasan University, who introduced the concept of disaster management and brought to light the importance of being prepared for natural disasters that cannot be avoided. Prof. V. Rammohan, Institute of Ocean Management, Anna University, Chennai, delivered the Keynote Address related to Geomatics. He Pointed out that natural disasters are necessary for life on earth to survive citing example that water supply through cyclones alone contributed water to the extent of 60% in TamilNadu and that floods are necessary to replenish the soil with nutrients, which are lost due to continuous harvesting. But, natural disasters cannot be prevented and cause death. He described the historical perspective of disasters in India such as the Bengal famine, Latur earthquake, Odissacyclone, etc., which had caused the death of lakhs of people. He also cited the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, which caused the death of lakhs of people and said that disasters have to be managed using science and technology. He brought to light the importance of GIS for disaster preparedness. He said that geomorphology map formation through remote sensing and colour coded maps are necessary to identify disaster prone areas. He explained the process of map construction based on height and indentation for tsunami preparedness. He also informed that cyclone hazard map of India identified the regions where major cyclones occurred and explained cyclone hazard rating based on wind and precipitation. He also explained the pattern of cyclones in India, specially in Tamil Nadu, which occur in the months of April-May and December, not during other months as they are created over land and not over sea. The cyclones created over sea cross Andhra Pradesh, which occur during the other months of the monsoon.

Next Prof. G. Palanidurai, Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Panchayati Raj Studies, Gandhigram Rural Insitute, Dindigul, delivered the Keynote Address related to socio-economic issues. Quoting Einstein, he said that all scientific knowledge should be useful for the people otherwise it should be called an aberration. The role of people in disaster management and preparedness is essential and the common people are prepared to some extent. But, he argued that the scientists

and policy makers, who are also people, and who should contribute to the improvement of the lives of the common people actually end-up making their situation much worse. He said that disasters are happening more frequently now a days, not natural disasters, but man-made disasters. To manage disasters, the Government of India has enacted the “National Disaster Management Act”, which envisages that all policies should have disaster management strategies. But, what has happened is that it has become a mechanical process and funds are allocated for disaster management, which are doled out to people affected by disaster. In this respect, the policy makers have made people for whom the policies are made as mere beneficiaries. For example, during the tsunami disaster, in the first three days no outsider was present in the affected villages and people of these affected villages managed well in taking care of the injured and burying the dead bodies. Later, all kind of people like policy makers, revenue department officials, NGOs, International Agencies came entered the scene and started dictating terms to the affected people as they thought of the affected people in terms of beneficiaries of the funds, which they had at their disposal. He said that agencies have to work with the people and not for the people. Involvement of local bodies and communities is essential for disaster management in particular and development at large.

Speaking on development, he said that understanding the concepts of development, democracy, administration and governance is very difficult. Nordic countries like Norway, Netherlands and Denmark are examples, where communities give power to the State and not the other way round as in India. India follows a minimal democracy of conducting elections. The core values of democracy like fairness, justice and equality are kept at bay. In a democracy people have to be lead and not ruled. But, in India people are being ruled and not lead. People have to be involved and to be educated to be citizens, and should not be treated as beneficiaries.

For better disaster management and preparedness, he suggested three measures, which are, first, the National Disaster Management Act should be amended to incorporate the role of local bodies and communities; second, evolving a training policy in India for policy makers at all levels starting from MPs, MLAs and the local body members, and also the common people; third, use of the accumulated knowledge from the past incidents to create awareness and find solutions.

Later, Dr. Srinivasamurthy of Pondicherry University, spoke on, Saline Water Intrusion and Aquifer Mapping, Dr. T. Subramani of Anna University, Chennai, spoke on Ghats Road

Alignment using Geospatial Techniques, chaired by Dr. V. Rammohan. Then, Dr. K.SrinivasaRaju of Anna University, Chennai, spoke on Urban Floor Modelling – A Geomatics Approach, Dr. AmalorpavMary of Social Development Trust, Gujrat, spoke on Sustainability through Participation, Empowerment and Decentralization, chaired by Dr. A. Balukarasu of the Centre for Remote Sensing, Bharathidasan University. Dr. P. Udayaganesan, Head of the Department of Geology, Alagappa Govt. Arts College, Karaikkudi, delivered the Valedictory Address. Dr. C. Lakshumanan, Assistant Professor of the Centre for Remote Sensing and Dr. N. Prasanna, Assistant Professor of the Department of Economics, Bharathidasan University, the organizing secretaries of the seminar, and Dr. Muthamilselvan, Assistant Professor of the Centre for Remote Sensing also spoke.

Around 150 students, research scholars and faculty members from various Departments of Bharathidasan University, Anna University, Alagappa Govt. Arts College and other institutions participated and benefitted.