

Centre Urges States to Conduct Civil Defence Drills Amid Security Concerns

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Civil Defence Drills Latest News

- Amid rising tensions along the Line of Control following the Pahalgam terror attack and the possibility of an Indian military response, the Centre has instructed northern and western states and Union Territories to test and reinforce their civil defence systems.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has directed states like Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana to conduct mock drills on May 7 to prepare for any hostile attack.

Overview of Civil Defence

- Civil Defence measures are designed to address emergency situations, protect the public, and help restore critical services and infrastructure damaged by disasters or hostile attacks.

Historical Background

- Initially, Civil Defence in India focused on awareness and planning under the **Emergency Relief Organization** (ERO).
- The 1962 China War and 1965 Indo-Pak conflict prompted a policy shift.
- This led to the enactment of the **Civil Defence Act, 1968**, enabling protective measures across India during hostile attacks.

Civil Defence Act, 1968 and Amendments

- The Civil Defence Act, 1968 authorizes non-combat measures to protect people and property from hostile attacks via air, land, or sea.
- It also enables the formation of the Civil Defence Corps and the creation of rules and regulations.
- The 2009 Amendment expanded its scope to include disaster management as an additional function of Civil Defence, covering both natural and man-made disasters.

Geographical Scope and Categorization

- Though applicable across India, Civil Defence is operational in tactically and strategically vulnerable areas.
- Civil Defence activities are currently limited to 259 categorized towns across 36 States and Union Territories.
- 100 Multi-Hazard Prone Districts have been specifically identified for enhanced preparedness.

Organizational Structure

- Civil Defence is primarily volunteer-based, supported by a small number of paid staff during peacetime and expanded during crises.
- The current volunteer target is 14.11 lakh, of which 5.38 lakh have already been raised.
- The organisation is managed and trained by Deputy Controllers, Medical Officers, and Civil Defence Instructors.
- Duty and training allowances are provided to volunteers.
- The long-term goal is to have 1 crore Civil Defence volunteers across India within 7 years.

MHA Issues Civil Defence Directives

- The Ministry of Home Affairs instructed states like Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana to conduct **mock drills on May 7**.
- The drills will be conducted down to the village level in 244 vulnerable districts.

Key Measures Include

- Operationalising air raid sirens
- Implementing blackout protocols
- Training civilians and students on safety measures
- Evacuation rehearsals
- Camouflaging critical infrastructure (e.g., power plants, military sites)

Mobilisation of Civil Defence volunteers

- Over 4 lakh Civil Defence volunteers under the Directorate General, Civil Defence (DGC), MHA will be mobilised.
- These steps aim to enhance preparedness against potential aerial or ground attacks.

Examples of Measures Already Taken

- A 30-minute blackout drill was conducted in Ferozepur, Punjab on May 4, where residents switched off lights from 9:00–9:30 PM.
- The Ferozepur Cantonment Board issued public advisories for participation.

Civil Defence Drills FAQs

Q1. What prompted the Centre to initiate civil defence drills?

Ans. Rising tensions after the Pahalgam attack and potential military retaliation prompted the Centre to initiate preparedness measures.

Q2. Which states are conducting the drills?

Ans. Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana were instructed to conduct civil defence drills on May 7.

Q3. What is the Civil Defence Act, 1968?

Ans. It authorizes non-combat measures to protect civilians and property during hostile attacks and includes volunteer mobilisation.

Q4. What activities are included in the drills?

Ans. Air raid sirens, blackout drills, camouflaging infrastructure, evacuation training, and volunteer mobilisation are key activities.

Q5. What are India's long-term goals for civil defence?

Ans. The goal is to train 1 crore Civil Defence volunteers across India in the next 7 years.

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