FIRE PREVENTION IS BETTER OPTION

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The Fire Services in the country observe National Fire Service Day on 14th April. This day is observed to pay homage to the Firemen Martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the course of duty and to inspire fire fighters of today to dedicate their services in saving life and property from the ever increasing hazards of fire. Of late there has been a phenomenal increase in the incidents of fire and many precious lives, besides crores of rupees worth properties are lost in fire. Fire used to be treated with reverence, as an intermediary between God and people. In the modern day fire should be worshipped by taking precautionary measures. The tremendous fire losses, which occur annually, constitute serious problems both socially and economically to the nation. In order to generate fire safety awareness, the theme selected this year for Fire Service Week is –

FIRE PREVENTION IS BETTER OPTION .

Fire prevention essentially consists of the following components:

- Create policy environment in which the preventive aspects are prominently stressed and Laws, Rules and Regulations are oriented towards prevention.

- Generate all-round awareness about the advantages and relatively lesser costs of preventing fire accidents compared to fire-fighting and rescue, both for life and property.

- Pro-active and pre-emptive steps that inhibit the starting and spreading of fire.

The State of Goa of late has experienced rapid growth in all the sectors of development, be it housing, transport, industry, irrigation, power, education or health. The increase in population in the years to come will have a serious impact on the housing problem. Speed of construction is thus of an outmost importance and special consideration has to be given to industrialized systems of building. With increased building activity, it is also essential that there should be some architectural control in the development of our cities and towns, if creation of ugliness and slum-like conditions in our urban areas is to be avoided. Studies at National level resulted in the recommendation that a National Building Code be prepared to unify the building regulations throughout the country for use by government department, municipal bodies and other construction agencies.

The first edition of the National Building Code was published in 1970. Later in 1983, it was revised to include various modifications and addition to different parts and sections of the code which included; addition of development control rules; requirements for greenbelts and landscaping including norms for plantation of shrubs, trees; special requirements for low income housing; fire safety regulations for high rise buildings; revision of structural design section based on new and revised codes, such as Concrete code, Earthquake code, Masonry code; requirements relating to noise and vibration; energy conservation for air-conditioning and guidance on the design of water supply system for multi-storied buildings. The code was again revised and amendments were issued to the code in 1987 and in 1997. Taking into consideration the developments in the field of building construction including the lessons learnt in the aftermath of number of natural calamities like devastating earthquake and super cyclone witnessed by the country, a comprehensive revision of the code was taken up under the aegis of National Building Code select committee and the revised code has been brought out in 2005 as "**NATIONAL BUILDING CODE OF INDIA 2005** reflecting the state-of-the-art and contemporary applicable international practices. The salient features of this latest revision of the code are:

1) Inclusion of a complete philosophy and direction for successfully accomplishing the building projects through integrated Multi-disciplinary Approach right from conceptual stage through planning, designing, construction, operation and maintenance stages.

2) A series of reforms in building permit process.

3) Provision for ensuring and certification of safety of building against natural disaster by engineer and structural engineer.

4) Provision for two stage permit for high rise residential and special buildings.

5) Provision for periodic renewal certificate of occupied buildings from structural, fire, electrical and health safety point of view.

6) Provision for empowering engineers and architects for sanctioning plans of residential buildings up to 500 m^2.

7) Inclusion of detailed town planning norms for various amenities such as educational facilities, medical facilities, distribution services, police, civil defence, fire services, etc.

8) Revision of parking requirements for metro and mega cities.

9) Updating of special requirements for low income housing for urban areas.

10) Inclusion of special requirements for low income housing for rural habitat planning.

11) Inclusion of guidelines for development planning for hilly areas.

12) Revision of the provisions for buildings and facilities for physically challenged.

13) Fire safety norms completely revamped through detailed provisions on Fire Prevention, Life Safety and Fire Protection.

14) Inclusion of new categories of starred hotels, heritage structures and archeological monuments for fire safety provisions.

15) Substitution of halon based fire extinguishers/fire fighting system.

16) Promotion to new/innovative building materials/technologies.

17) Inclusion of latest provisions for earthquake resistant design and construction.

18) Inclusion of details on multi-disaster prone districts.

19) Inclusion of new chapter on design and construction using bamboo.

20) Chapter on prefabricated and composite construction for speedier construction.

21) Updating of provision of safety in construction.

22) Complete revision of provision on building and plumbing services in line with applicable international practices.

23) Provisions on rain water harvesting.

24) Inclusion of new chapter to cover landscaping needs.

In a disaster prone country like ours, National Building Code 2005 would serve as an effective tool for design and construction engineers, architects, government construction departments and other construction agencies, builders and developers and for administrators/local bodies to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable habitat for citizens of our country.

It is a national instrument for helping in regulating the building construction activity across the length and breadth of the country to ensure safe and orderly development.

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