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## “Right systems can turn natural disasters into opportunities”

Special Correspondent

*Rajasthan floods caused destruction, yet replenished water reserves: Swaminathan*

— Photo:R.Ragu



**HONOUR FOR VETERAN: M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, receiving a memento from H. Devaraj, Director, Guindy Campus, Madras University, at a workshop in Chennai on Saturday. Terry Jeggle, DRM Reduction Specialist, UN-ISDR, Geneva, is in the picture.**

CHENNAI: Even natural disasters can be made into opportunities if the right systems and regulations are in place to improve disaster awareness and facilitate mobilisation, according to agricultural scientist and Member of Parliament M.S. Swaminathan.

“Disaster management should emphasise pro-active measures and not just be about reacting to a flood or drought situation,” he said, speaking at the conclusion of an international workshop on disaster management organised at the University of Madras on Saturday. “If we look at disaster management holistically and are prepared, even calamities can be mitigated and made into opportunities. While the floods in Rajasthan caused severe destruction, they also replenished water reserves in a drought-prone region.”

Disaster management strategies, he said, had to link developments in modern science-like forecasting technologies-to the existing systems of traditional knowledge. “We discovered that in the Andamans, the indigenous knowledge played an important role before the tsunami.”

Around 30 participants attended the three-day workshop, organised by the university’s Centre for Natural Hazards and Disaster Studies. The workshop also brought together representatives from across the globe to share their experience.

“Initial recognition and awareness is crucial to disaster management,” said Terry Jeggle, disaster risk management specialist, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. “This underlies the importance of this programme. The experiences of different countries can be used to improve on the experiences had by the people of Tamil Nadu.”

Rakhi Bhavnani, a hazard risk management consultant of the World Bank, said that while there was a good body of knowledge on the subject in Tamil Nadu, there was a need for teachers to come up with more creative ways of disseminating the information to school and college students.

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