



# Kerala floods: Why India turned down 'UAE offer' — a 2004 policy, its symbolic signal

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- On Wednesday, India turned down the UAE's reported offer of Rs 700 crore as aid for flood relief in Kerala. While this came despite a 2016 National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) that provides for accepting foreign assistance, the NDMP is different from the policy followed by New Delhi since December 2004, soon after the tsunami.
- The NDMP, finalised in May 2016, says, "The Government of India does not issue any appeal for foreign assistance in the wake of a disaster. However, if the national government of another country voluntarily offers assistance as a goodwill gesture in solidarity with the disaster victims, the Central Government may accept the offer." It says the Home Ministry is required to coordinate with the External Affairs Ministry, primarily responsible for reviewing foreign offers of assistance and channelising these.
- While the 2016 guidelines have been mostly on paper, the government has been following the policy on disaster aid decided in 2004, when then PM Manmohan Singh said, "We feel that we can cope with the situation on our own and we will take their help if needed." Since then, New Delhi has decided to follow a policy of not accepting aid from foreign governments.

### Before & after 2004

- After the tsunami, the government might have felt that India had the capacity to handle disasters like these. "And secondly, accepting from any one government opens the floodgates for others as well, and it would be diplomatically difficult to refuse from some while accepting from others," an official said.
- However, this policy is limited to foreign governments and does not extend to individuals and charity organisations.

Until then, India had accepted aid from foreign governments — for the Uttarkashi earthquake (1991), Latur earthquake (1993), Gujarat earthquake (2001), Bengal cyclone (2002) and Bihar floods (July 2004). In the last 14 years, it has refused aid from Russia, the US and Japan for the Uttarakhand floods in 2013, the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 and Kashmir floods in 2014.

- Clarifying the grounds for refusal of foreign aid for Kerala floods, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "In line with the existing policy, the Government is committed to meeting the requirements for relief and rehabilitation through domestic efforts." Maldives, Qatar and Thailand, besides the UAE, have offered

monetary support for relief operations in Kerala.

**For multilateral assistance, the 2016 NDMP guidelines say**

- An offer of assistance from UN agencies, India will accept the offer only if the government considers it necessary, based on various factors. If accepted, GoI will issue directions to the respective Ministry or State Government to coordinate with the concerned UN agency.
- Any financial assistance offered by UN financial institutions involving foreign exchange will require the approval of the Department of Economic Affairs.
- India will allow UN agencies and international NGOs already operating in the country at the time of the disaster event to continue their humanitarian assistance to people in the affected area in coordination with the relevant Central Ministries/Departments and the State Government as per applicable norms and protocols.”

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