Standard operating procedure released for providing telecommunication services during disasters

March 8, 2021
In News

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) released a standard operating procedure (SOP) for providing telecommunication services for effective mitigation and recovery during disaster and emergency.

Key features of the SOP

- **Institutional structure for co-ordination:**
    - Coordination Committees will be set up at the national and state or telecom circle level.
    - The National Committee will issue guidelines as required for effective preparedness and response to disasters.
    - The State Committee will coordinate and monitor all disaster-related activities at the state level.
    - It will also oversee the sectoral requirement for rescue, relief, and restoration at the state and district level.
    - The State Committee will establish a camp office at the respective district headquarter for the specified purpose.
- The Committee at the national level will be chaired by the Member (Technology) of the DoT.
- At the state or telecom circle level, the committee will be chaired by the respective Deputy Director General (Technology).

- These committees will have representatives from:
    - technical wings of DoT,
    - telecom service providers (TSPs),
    - respective disaster management authority.

Requirements for TSPs

- The SoP specifies certain norms to be followed by TSPs for ensuring safety and availability of physical infrastructure during disasters.
- It also requires all TSPs to:
    - Prepare a disaster management plan,
    - Designate nodal officers at national and telecom circle level for coordination related to disaster management,
    - Set up a disaster response task force at the state level for immediate provisioning of emergency communication and restoration of services, and
    - Set up a rapid damage assessment team to determine the nature and extent of the damage.
- TSPs may enter into memorandum of understanding among themselves for sharing specialised resources and intra-circle roaming for provisioning of services.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

- A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a set of step-by-step instructions compiled by an organization to help workers carry out routine operations.
- SOPs aim to achieve efficiency, quality output and uniformity of performance, while reducing miscommunication and failure to comply with industry regulations.
- The military (e.g. in the U.S. and UK) sometimes uses the term standing (rather than standard) operating procedure because a military SOP refers to a unit's unique procedures, which are not necessarily standard to another unit.

- The word "standard" can imply that only one (standard) procedure is to be used across all units.
- The term can also be used facetiously to refer to practices that are unconstructive, yet the norm. In the Philippines, for instance, "SOP" is the term for pervasive corruption within the government and its institutions.