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## **Image-based technology can save more lives**

K. Manikandan



*The Hindu* Anoop Madhavan - Photo: R. Ragu

In an admirable display of courage, will and commitment, the entire team involved in rescue efforts, primarily personnel from National Disaster Response Force, firemen, police and volunteers in addition to vehicle operators and paramedical staff worked round the clock, strained every single nerve to rescue many people trapped under the rubble.

But could more lives have been saved had sophisticated equipment driven by advanced technology been available at the disposal of the rescue team? Yes, feels an expert who has been involved in rescue efforts in disaster sites the world over.

Anoop Madhavan, who was involved in relief operations in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake in 2010, says that while in manpower terms,

India is second to none, she has yet to catch up with the rest of the world when it comes to using state-of-the-art equipment.

He says that a glance at the inventory of equipment clearly reveals that the NDRF has in its possession some fine gadgets, but not exactly on a par with those possessed by countries that witness natural disasters at frequent intervals, apart from man-made accidents. Some of the advanced equipment is audio-based, while the need of the hour, as the Moulivakkam tragedy proves, are gadgets to provide the exact location and condition of trapped workers based on visuals.

For instance, a high-end thermal imaging camera with provisions to even supply fluids to those trapped under the debris is being used the world over, says Mr. Madhavan, chief executive officer of Survival Instincts, authorised provider of the American Red Cross health and safety training programme.

The gadget can reach corners inaccessible to rescue personnel. “We still have a long way to go in terms of putting to use radio communication technologies that can be operated without satellite connectivity, SIM cards or even microwave towers,” he adds.

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