

INTERVIEW | PUSHPENDRA JOHARI BUSINESS

Gujarat, Diu bore 65% of the ₹15,000 crore estimated loss caused by Tauktae: Pushpendra Johari



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‘Two regions share 65% of the ₹15,000 crore estimated loss’

Cyclone Tauktae is estimated to have caused losses to the tune of ₹15,000 crore, including ₹9,000 crore to the agriculture and transportation sectors, an initial assessment by RMSI, a provider of geospatial and engineering solutions, shows. Pushpendra Johari, Senior VP – Sustainability, RMSI, said Gujarat and Diu suffered 65% of these losses. Edited excerpts:

What was the intensity of the cyclone and the impact on different States?

Cyclone Tauktae is a unique cyclone event that has impacted all the western coastal States and UT of India. Gujarat and Diu were badly impacted.

The impact to Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa was primarily due to flooding and soil erosion along the coast due to a mild surge. The wind impact was primarily on electric poles and telecom towers, disrupting power supply and communication in certain areas.

The real brunt was borne by Gujarat and Diu, where many households, ports and electric power substations were damaged, in addition to the electric poles and trees.

What is the estimated loss caused by the cyclone?

The initial potential loss from Cyclone Tauktae is estimated to be ₹15,000 crore. Out of this, at least 65% of the losses are expected from Gujarat and Daman & Diu. The remaining losses are expected from Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka. Nearly, 25-40% losses are expected from the agriculture sector from all the above impacted States. Around 15-20% from transportation sector, primarily ports, and a similar loss share from the utility sector, primarily power and telecom.

The storm affected about 2.5 lakh houses causing more damage to *kutcha* houses. There hasn't been much damage to concrete houses.

The cyclone uprooted lots of trees and electric poles. In Gujarat only, our estimates indicate that about 50 thousand poles would have been damaged, disrupting power supply to at least 20 lakh people. There is a damage of about ₹100 crore to the ports (structures only) primarily in Amreli and Junagad, with some damage to ports in Kachchh, Rajot and Surat

How much was the loss from previous cyclones?

Cyclone Nisarga on June 3, 2020 had caused total loss of about ₹10,000 crore. The Amphan cyclone that hit West Bengal last year and also impacted Odisha caused losses to the tune of ₹30,000 crore but it was a much more severe cyclone than Tauktae, with wind speeds in the range of 260 kmph.

What is the impact on the insurance industry?

The insurance industry loss due to this event is primarily driven by impact to ports and vehicles and potentially agriculture (primarily plantations and horticulture) as no major city has been impacted. The structural losses are to the tune of ₹100 crore, but the content losses could be very high for ports. We are not sure if the power and communication network and substations are insured or not.

What has been learnt from Tauktae?

There are several learnings from this event for mitigation and preparedness. What happened at Bombay High could have been avoided had ONGC been using a 'decision support system' that would have informed them ahead of the time to evacuate the barges and secure them or move them to a safer place (if possible). RMSI is currently implementing these kind of solutions for various government agencies as well as the public sector.

Similarly, there is a strong need to improve the performance of our electric power and communication network. There is a strong initiative through CDRI for this and we are happy to share that we are part of the first such project that is under way right now.

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