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FIRE SAFETY NORMS AND PERSONAL WELL BEING: AN OVERVIEW

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"Safety's intention is accident prevention".

INTRODUCTION

Among the hazardous risks, Fire has been one of the oldest risks around us. It is the most destructive threat to human life and property. Fire accident in buildings, establishments such as hospitals, commercial houses and high rise buildings have been found flouting fire safety norms which ultimately resulting into major fire tragedies. Awareness towards fire safety has not been quite forthcoming. To find the reasons, frequency and giving protection to all type of buildings became challenges to the professionals and investigations have revealed that in most cases, fire occurred due to sheer negligence.

It is a hard and bitter fact that with the scientific and technological developments the modern cities are becoming much advance with the presence of number of multi-storeyed buildings, malls, multiplexes etc. and hence giving rise to fire-problems. During the last one decade there was a vibrant growth in the constructions activities in India, especially in High Rise buildings. Thousands of High Rise buildings have already constructed in metros and major cities in India, and thousands are under construction. Because of its peculiar nature, fire in residential buildings in particular, high rise buildings become more complex and the salvaging operations become more difficult and sometimes even resulting in many deaths and huge property losses.

On an average, in India, every year, about 25,000 persons die due to fires and related causes. Female accounts for about 66% of those killed in fire accidents. It is estimated that about 42 females and 21 males die every day in India due to fire.

According to the statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau, fire accounts for

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about 5.9% (23,281) of the total deaths reported due to natural and un-natural causes during the year 2012. Probably many of these deaths could have been prevented, had we taken enough fire protection measures.[1]

History shows that committees concerned with safety have developed many building regulations, codes and standards for the prevention of fire. To quench the thirst and to find out the answers to the above said questions, the present paper is focused at the existing building regulatory system which is silent with respect to many of National Building Code 2005, provisions, in general and disaster resistant mitigation features, in particular. The main objective of the paper is relating to the existing norms as to Fire Prevention, Life Safety and Fire Protection in India and to identify those issues which are responsible for the different fire tragedies in India and to suggest and adopt adequate measures for plugging the loopholes.

ELEMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR FIRE TRAGEDIES

Fire safety policies apply at the construction of a building and throughout its operating life. A survey on fire tragedies clearly shows that major fire incidents are due to the electrical short-circuits. A short circuit is "an abnormal low resistance connection between two nodes of an electrical circuit intended to be at different voltages" and this results in an excessive electric current which has the potential to cause circuit damage, overheating, fire or explosion. Overloaded wires can also overheat and damage to the wires' insulation or a fire.

The other reasons for fire outbreaks include:

(i) Obstruction-free exit points.
(ii) Combustible materials and inflammable debris kept in the building close to the places of potential fire outbreak.
(iii) Cigarettes, matches, flames from stoves/candles, firecrackers and over-heating of gadgets.
(iv) Hot and dry season from March to June add to the possibility of fire as also the careless use of electrical equipment, naked wires and loose joints.
(v) Non Availability of Emergency lights and sign posts.
(vi) Lack of proper Sound and Warning systems to convey the message in case of emergency.

[1] R.R. Nair, "Fire Safety in India - An overview", 8 ISR 102 (2013).

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(vii) Space constraints for the entry and effective operation of firefighting vehicles and non- availability of water for contributing fire.

(viii) Lack of smoke detectors, fire alarm, fire extinguishers, water buckets and fire drills.

THE BUILDING AND FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS IN INDIA

BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS

Bureau of Indian Standards has rendered invaluable service by producing large number of national standards, which are of direct relevance to the construction industry and some of them particular to the mitigation of disasters.[2]

Fire Fighting Sectional Committee, CED 22 of BIS is engaged in formulation of Indian Standards on Fire Fighting equipments/extinguishers using water, carbon dioxide, foam, dry powder and halon as extinguishing agents. In view of the phasing out of halons as per Montreal Protocol, BIS has recently published various standards on halon alternatives. These are intended for use by the Fire brigades and other organizations.

BIS has formulated more than 100 standards on firefighting including standards on various types of fire tenders, fire engines, trailer pumps and high capacity portable pump sets etc. Fire Safety Sectional Committee, CED 36 of BIS has formulated a series of Indian Standards pertaining to General requirements and specific to various buildings & industries.

Some of the important standards formulated by this Committee are as follows:[3]

IS 1641:1988	Code of practice for fire safety of buildings (general) : General principles office grading and classification (first revision)
IS 1642:1989	Code of practice for fire safety of buildings (general) : Details of construction (first revision)
IS 1643:1988	Code of practice for fire safety of buildings (general) : Exposure hazard (first revision)
IS 1644:1988	Code of practice for fire safety of buildings (general) : Exit requirements and personal hazard (first revision)

[2] Status Report on Standardization Efforts in the Area of Mitigation of Natural Hazards, 1 (Government of India Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Division).
[3] *Id.* at 9.

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IS 1646:1997	Code of practice for fire safety of buildings (general) : Electrical installations (second revision)
IS 3034:1993	Code of practice for fire safety of industrial buildings : Electrical generating and distributing stations (second revision)
IS 3079:1990	Code of practice for fire safety of industrial buildings : Cotton textile mills (first revision)
IS 8758:1993	Recommendations for fire precautionary measures in the construction of temporary structures and pandals (first revision)
IS 11457(Part 1):1985	Code of practice for fire safety of chemical industries : Part 1 Rubber and plastic
IS 11460:1985	Code of practice for fire safety of libraries and archives buildings
IS 12456:1988	Code of practice for fire protection of electronic data processing installation
IS 13694:1993	Code of practice for fire safety in iron and steel industries
IS 13716:1993	Code of practice for fire safety of hotels
IS 14435:1997	Code of practice for fire safety in educational institutions

The National Building Code of India (NBC), 2005

The National Building Code of India (NBC), 2005 is a national instrument that guides the regulations for construction activity. It contains all the important aspects relevant for safe and orderly building development. The building that does not satisfy building code or violation of National building code will lead to penalty, cancellation of sanction or demolition of the building. The NBC gives detailed guidelines for Construction Materials, General Requirements for all buildings, Life Safety, Fire Protection, Specific Occupancy wise Requirements and specific requirements for buildings above 15 meters.[4]

[4] The National Building Code of India (NBC), Bureau of Indian Standards, New Delhi (2005).

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NATIONAL BUILDING CODE (PART 4) – FIRE PROTECTION

The 'part 4' of 'National Building Code of India – 2005' on 'Fire & Life Safety' covers the requirements for fire prevention & life safety in relation to fire and fire protection of buildings. As a major development, BIS has published NBC (Part 4) Fire Protection which includes comprehensive recommendation of minimum standards of fire protection.

It specifies the demarcation of fire zones, restrictions on construction of buildings in each fire zone, classification of buildings based on occupancy, types of building construction according to fire resistance of the structural and nonstructural components and other restrictions and requirements necessary to minimize danger to life from fire, smoke, fumes or panic before the building can be evacuated.

The Code recognizes that safety of life is more than a matter of means of exits and accordingly deals with various matters which are considered essential to the safety of life. The Code specifies construction, occupancy and protection features that are necessary to minimize danger to life and property from fire.[5]

Various State Governments and Local Bodies have incorporated many of the provisions of the National Building Code of India, 2005, in their own building regulations. Maharashtra state is an excellent example which has not only adopted the provisions of National Building Code but also made it mandatory in its Fire Prevention & Life Safety Measures Rules. The Maharashtra Fire Prevention and Life Safety Measures Rules 2009, framed under the Maharashtra Fire Prevention and Life Safety Measures Act 2006.[6]

IMPEDIMENTS IN FIRE FIGHTING AND IGNORANCE OF FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS IN INDIA[7]

- Unauthorized erections of temporary structures, such as pandals, tents, shamiana, etc. wherein electrical wires precariously hang on and are connected to the main in the adjacent building.
- Fire extinguishers are seldom found at such places.

[5] Supra note 4 at 10.
[6] Supra note 1 at 106.
[7] Available at: lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/manmadedisaster.pdf (2- 3) (Jul 20, 2012) (Visited on October
23, 2017).

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- No check is being conducted to observe electrical and fire safety standards.
- A qualified or at least experienced electrician is rarely available in case of short circuit or other related matters.
- There is no adequate inspecting staff to visit and to keep a check on unauthorized acts/omissions or violations.
- Lack of coordination among various regulatory agencies of Government to give permission for erecting such structures.
- No proper care and attention is being given while granting the permission for construction of building or license for occupation and for renewal.
- Ignorance of the concerned authorities like the Engineering staff, the Fire personnel and the Electrical Inspectors to ensure that the building is structurally sound and safe.
- No Regular visits by the concerned authorities to keep a check that any kind of combustible materials and inflammable debris are not kept in the building close to the places of potential fire outbreak.
- No regular check on the electrical installations and connections including wiring which is exposed to the risk of occurrence of short-circuit.
- No awareness and adequate training is imparted to the staff and occupants to use the fire- fighting kits and extinguishers in case of emergency.
- No Periodical inspections to rectify the crucial defects and potential sources of danger though that is a mandate as per the rule book.
- The punishments prescribed by the laws governing various aspects of safety and maintenance are not adequate and in any case they are not deterrent enough to exact compliance. The Management can very well pay a meager amount of fine and continue to violate the laws such as under the Cinematograph law.
- Lack of sufficient number of Fire Stations with adequate trained personnel and upgraded fire combating equipment.
- There is no training programme to the Fire and Building Inspectors or for Factories and Electrical Inspectors and Mine Safety Officers.
- Building collapses occur on account of weak foundations as no sufficient care is taken while granting permissions or to inspect during the construction stage. The architect, contractor and engineer engaged by the builder never try to comply with the provisions of National Building Code.[8]

[8] Available at: lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/manmadedisaster.pdf, (2-3) (Jul 20, 2012) (Visited on October 23, 2017).

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MAJOR FIRE INCIDENTS IN INDIAN HISTORY

There have been many instances when the authorities have highlighted risk of fire in buildings. History is full of fire tragedies at various places where mere negligence of fire safety norms have taken lives of thousands of people.

Bangalore Circus Fire (1981)

The 1981 Bangalore circus fire occurred on 8 February, 1981 at Venus Circus in Bangalore, India. More than 92 lives were lost, the majority of them being children.

Dabwali Fire Accident (1995)

The Dabwali fire accident occurred on 23 December 1995 at Mandi Dabwali, a town in Sirsa district, Haryana, India. The incident occurred at the Rajiv Marriage Palace in Dabwali. Local DAV Public School was holding its annual prize distribution function. A synthetic tent, which had been set up inside the building, caught alight when an electric generator short-circuited. The fire spread quickly and blocked the main entrance. About 1,500 people tried to escape through the single exit door, which results into stampede. At least 400 people died in the fire, and 160 were injured.

A one-man Commission was set up, headed by Justice TP Garg in January 2003. The Commission was set up to investigate the incident and to calculate the amount of compensation owed to the families of the victims. The Commission presented its report after six years and Compensation was set at Rs. 18 crore which was later on, in November 2009, increased up to Rs. 34 crore with an extra 6% interest for the delay by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The money was to be jointly supplied by the DAV trust and the Haryana government

Uphaar Cinema Fire (1997)

The Uphaar Cinema fire is calculated as one of the worst fire tragedies in India. The fire incident took place at Uphaar Cinema, in Green Park, Delhi, occurred on Friday, 13 June 1997. The 3-to-6 pm show of the movie “Border’ was going on. Almost 59 people died due to suffocation and 103 were seriously injured in the resulting stampede. The final verdict came ten years after the incident on 20 November, 2007.

Erwadi Fire Incident (2001)

Erwadi fire incident occurred on 6 August 2001, where inmates were bound by chains at

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Moideen Badusha Mental Home in Erwadi Village in Tamil Nadu. In this incident, 28 inmates of a mental asylum died in fire.

After it mental homes were closed on 13 August 2001. More than 500 inmates were taken under government's care. A commission headed by N. Ramdas was set up to enquire into these deaths. The commission recommended that care of mentally ill people is to be improved, that anybody wishing to set up a mental home to acquire a license, and that all inmates be unchained. In 2007, a magistrate Court awarded seven years imprisonment to the owner of the Badsha Home for the Mentally Challenged, his wife and two relatives.

Srirangam Marriage Hall Fire (2004)

The Srirangam marriage hall fire accident was happened on 23 January 2004 during a Hindu marriage function in Padmapriya Marriage Hall in Srirangam, a town in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. A total of 57 people, including the groom, were killed and 50 others were injured in the fire due to a short circuit in the electric wire connecting a video camera, which lit up the temporary thatched roof set up in the first level of the hall.

On 14 June 2012, District Court of Tiruchirapalli sentenced owner of the wedding hall, to two years rigorous imprisonment and ordered to pay a compensation of 50,000 each to the dependents of the victims and 10,000 each to those injured in the accident.The videographer was sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment, the hall manager, to one year imprisonment and the electrician, to six months imprisonment.

Kumbakonam Fire Tragedy (2004)

The nation was shocked over the ghastly incident that took place in this temple town of Thanjavur district of Tamilnadu. Nearly a hundred students of the Sri Krishna Saraswathi School in Kumbakonam were burnt to death and several others got injured in a deadly fire accident. 93 children were burnt alive.

On this issue, National Building Code formulated by Bureau of Indian Standards which speaks about the rules and regulations regarding fire safety measures to be adopted in educational institutions, has got several provisions to protect school buildings from such dreadful events. The school buildings should be constructed to ensure students can evacuate the building at the rate of one minute or less per floor. Exit (stairways) of at least half-metre width should be

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provided for every 25 students. All institutions should have basic fire-fighting equipment like carbon dioxide cylinders, water and sand buckets and should know their right applications. Schools should carry out fire drills in accordance with the fire safety plan at least once every three months. Perhaps the deficient monitoring by the education department allowed the school authorities to run it in such a neglected manner for a long period.

Meerut Fire Tragedy (2006)

Meerut fire which took place subsequent to the NBC 2005 is also an eye opener. The incident took place at The Consumer Trade Fair, organized by Brand India Consumers Forum and was jointly sponsored by the local Dainik Jagaran, in Victoria Park, Meerut, killing at least 100 people and injuring 150 others due to a short circuit. An estimated 2,000 people were at the fair when the fire broke out.

North-East Delhi Fire Tragedy (2011)

Fire broke out at a community function of the eunuchs, gathered at the community centre in Nandnagari in East Delhi in which 14 eunuchs died and 50 injured. The Delhi Police registered a case against unknown persons for causing death due to negligence in this fire tragedy.

AMRI Hospital Kolkata Fire Tragedy (2011)

AMRI hospital fire tragedy took place in Kolkata, killing 73 people, majority of them patients. The blaze erupted in the building's basement, and heavy smoke quickly engulfed the hospital. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

Sivakasi Factory Explosion (2012)

The 2012 Sivakasi factory explosion was an explosion at the Om Sakthi Fireworks Industries fireworks factory in Sivakasi, India on 5 September 2012. 40 people were killed and more than 70 injured. The tragedy occurred in a fireworks factory which did not have a valid licence.

Kolkata Market Fire (2013)

This fire accident occurred in a five-storeyed marketplace in Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal, India, on 27 February 2013 by a short circuit in the first floor of the market. An estimated 19 people, who were mostly labourers working in the market were killed in the accident.

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Kerala Temple Fire Accident (2016)[9]

Worst-ever Fire tragedy happened in the crowded precincts of the Puttingal Devi Temple at Paravur, south of Kollam, in the state of Kerala, around 3.30 a.m. on 10th April 2016. An entire dump of fire crackers exploded which meant to be burst, to mark the conclusion of the Meena-Bharani festival. Nearly 110 persons were killed and 400 grievously injured in this pyrotechnics display.

A case was registered against the temple authorities, the fireworks contractor and the licensee, Surendran, who had stored about 150 kgs of crackers and fireworks material (ten times more than the permit) at the storehouse, without valid permission.

The State government has announced a judicial inquiry and a Crime Branch investigation into the disaster. The Prime Minister announced the ex gratia of Rs. 2 lakh to the kin of the deceased, whereas, the State Cabinet announced ex gratia of Rs. 10 lakh to the kin of the deceased and Rs. 2 lakh to the seriously injured.

Pulgaon ammo depot fire (2016)[10]

Central Ammunition Depot (CAD), Pulgaon, Maharashtra, located about 115 km from Nagpur, is spread over an area of more than 7,000 acres and stores a variety of ammunition and explosives in a large number of sheds. The fire started in one of the sheds and the Quick Reaction Teams and Fire Fighting Teams restricted it to that one shed. In the initial efforts to douse the fire, sixteen people, including two Army officers, died in a fire and Seventeen people, including two Army officers and nine personnel, were injured in the accident.

A GROUND LEVEL SURVEY OF PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF FIRE SAFETY NORMS

After a major fire accident in Kolkata's AMRI hospital in 2011, fire authorities conducted audits in many hospitals across the country. Fire safety audit of several major hospitals in Delhi and Mumbai revealed that more than half of the hospitals lack fire prevention measures. In case of high-rise buildings, the scenario is equally bad.

[9] Ignatius Pereira "Fireworks show in Kerala goes awry, kills 107" The Hindu, April 10, 2016 available at: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/live-kerala-kollam-temple-fire-several-dead/article8457603.ece (visited on October 11, 2017).

[10] Available at: http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/at-least-16-feared-dead-15-injured-in- massive-fire-in-pulgoan-arms-depot-2827732/ (Visited on October 23, 2017).

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In February 2012, the fire department in Mumbai had issued notices to as many as 383 high-rise buildings for not complying with fire safety regulations. Several high-rise buildings, approximately 60 percent in Gurgaon, have not renewed their no-objection certificate from the fire department. In Jaipur, a tourist hub, more than 90 percent of the high-rise buildings have less than adequate fire fighting measures. It has often been found that most of the buildings do not adhere to fire prevention measures as described under the National Building Code of India for they do not care about getting no-objection certificates from concerned authorities, as it does not entail any major penalty.

While responding to a right to information petition, Mumbai's fire department indicates that electrical short circuit and careless disposal of cigarettes/matches are important causes of fire in Mumbai. This is followed by flames from stoves/candles, firecrackers and over-heating of gadgets.[11]

While focusing on the risk of fire, a section of corporate sector have made efforts to train their employees on fire safety aspects. They have also jointly conducted fire safety mock drills on regular basis with the state fire departments. However, fire departments across the country are in imperative need of additional funds to modernize and upgrade their equipments as well as manpower skills. The most challenging part for the fire departments is to reach to the top of high- rise buildings for want of a necessary equipment to reach to the top.

The fire department of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has inducted a new imported fire tender at a cost of INR 110 million to tackle fire incidents in high-rise buildings. The fire tender, with 70 meter hydraulic platform has the capacity to douse fires at a height of 100 meters.[12]

In 2010-11, as many as 22,187 fire related calls were reported resulting in the death of 447 persons and injury to 2,613 persons across India. Heating systems and air-conditioning plants, especially in large and tall multi-storeyed buildings add to the fire hazard. The air-conditioning ducts offer easy path for fumes, gases and smoke to be conveyed to other parts of the building quickly and false ceilings of inflammable material also add to the hazard. In the summer months from May-August of 2012, as many as 9 major incidents of fire had been reported including

[11] India Risk Survey 22 (Pinkerton and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) 2012).
[12] India Risk Survey 23 (Pinkerton and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) 2012).

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the fire at Maharashtra Secretariat building in Mumbai on 21 June in which three people lost their lives.

Intensity of fire related incidents significantly reduces during winter months however, risk from fire remain a major cause of concern for the authorities and corporate houses in India. In Mumbai, the financial capital of India, almost 75% of fire-related incidents occur because of short circuit caused by loose wiring. Data from Mumbai fire department revealed that from 2009-2012, out of 13,185 incidents of fire, as many as 9, 711 incidents were caused by defective electric circuits in the city. Further examination of data provided by Mumbai fire department revealed that short circuits which are the main cause of city fire, often take place in old buildings in densely populated areas and crowded markets.

People have little knowledge to prevent such accidents and as such, are vulnerable to losses during these accidents. Although there are enough rules and regulations related to fire safety, these are seldom followed. Laxity in following fire safety measures in Safal Pegasus Complex in Prahladnagar, Ahmedabad caused major fire in the building injuring 11 people, some of them seriously, in November 2012. Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation authorities stated that in the absence of heavy fines and penalties, societies and members of such complexes do not bother to conduct maintenance of their safety systems. This is the case with other Indian states as well.[13]

INDIAN JUDICIARY VIS-A-VIS FIRE NORMS

Supreme Court of India has decided following cases, time to time, after the fire incidents took place in India. But despite of providing so many guidelines regarding the safety of different buildings there is not an end to such tragic incidents.

In ***Lok Adhikar Sangh vs. State Of Gujarat And Ors***[14], the petition was filed as a Public Interest Litigation as fire safety system was not provided to prevent accidents in cinema halls, factories and high-rise buildings.

A Division Bench in 1997, directed to take appropriate steps to get fire safety and fire protection measures including installation of such equipments in high-rise buildings which was

[13] India Risk Survey, 24 (Pinkerton and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (2013).
[14] AIR 2002 Guj 59.

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not complied with by the concerned Commissioner, Chairman of A.U.D.A. and Municipal Commissioner. Court issued a notice against these officers and were held liable for the loss suffered by the Corporation for permitting the builder/ developer/organizer/occupier for use of municipal drains without making payment.

In ***Sushil Ansal vs. State through CBI***[15] which is popularly known as "Uphaar Cinema Tradegy Case". This case was filed under Section 14 of Cinematograph Act, 1952, Sections 36, 304A, 337 and 338 of Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Twelve people, including the two Ansal brothers, were found guilty and were convicted for various charges, including, causing death by negligent act. They were awarded the maximum punishment of two years' rigorous imprisonment. They were also fined Rs.1,000 each for violating Section 14 of the Cinematography Act.

The other seven accused, three former Uphaar cinema managers, cinema's gatekeeper and three DVB officials, were all given seven years' rigorous imprisonment. The court also fined all the 12 accused with Rs.5, 000 each, and also sentenced all of them to two years' rigorous imprisonment, as they were found guilty of endangering personal safety of others, both the sentences however were to run concurrently.

On 19 August 2015, Supreme Court of India in its final verdict imposed a fine on Ansal brothers for 30 crores each and held that their jail terms will be reduced to the term already undergone by them if they pay the fine, considering their old age.

In ***Avinash Mehrotra vs Union of India & Ors***[16] Public Interest Litigation was filed relating to a fire incident that took place in the Lord Krishna Middle School in District Kumbakonam in the city of Madras, Tamil Nadu in which, 93 children were burnt alive. Petitioners prayed for the safer school conditions, setting up a Committee of jurists, legal experts and lawyers to formulate a comprehensive report in a time bound plan for carrying out reforms in the safety standards as prescribed in the schools, to evolve model safety standards as a part of Article 21 and for free and fair exercise of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15 and 19 of the Constitution of India.

[15] Criminal Appeal No. 597 of 2010.
[16] 2009 (6) SCC 398.

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Supreme Court held that it is imperative "that the education which is provided to children in the primary schools should be in the environment of safety." The Bench held that "each school must follow the bare minimum safety standards, in addition to the compliance of the National Building Code of India, 2005, in particular Part IV – Fire & Life Safety and the Code of Practice of Fire Safety in Educational Institutions (IS 14435:1997) of the Bureau of Indian Standards."[17]

In this case supreme court held that right to Education also includes right to receive education in a safe school. The court also stated that each Indian state is responsible for the safety of all schools within its jurisdiction. So, it provides so many directions to the State Governments and Union Territories to ensure the safety of the buildings as according to safety norms incorporated in the National Building Code of India.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

For mitigating a fire in any occupancy, whether it is a business house or in a factory or in a residential building, require a deep understanding about the problem. To combat and providing protection against the disasters like earthquake, cyclone and construction practices many countries have comprehensive national building code or national standards. But unfortunately, these guidelines are only recommendatory and do not have the mandatory status for their local application.

Although there are many countries which have mandatory building codes for providing protection to People and Property through safe construction. The code of Seattle, National Building Code of Canada, UK Building Regulations, and Japanese Codes are one of good examples as the provisions of these codes are mandatory to follow up.

In India, National Building Code, 2005 contains regulations which can be immediately adopted or enacted for use by various departments, municipal administrations and public bodies. It lays down a set of minimum provisions designed to protect the safety of the public with regard to structural sufficiency, fire hazards and health aspects of buildings.

Part-IV of National Building Code, 2005 contains Fire safety norms through detailed provisions on Fire Prevention, Life Safety and Fire Protection. Fire Safety norms are very rarely

[17] 4 Court News, 10-11 (April-June, 2009).

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included in Building Rules and are required to be incorporated in the local building regulatory documents.

Unfortunately, the authorities concerned with the enforcement of such standards, often keep their eyes shut to such violations and hence, endangered the lives of people. Although there are many rules and regulations, codes and standards related to fire safety, these are seldom followed. Laxity in following fire safety measures caused major fires in many buildings. In the absence of heavy fines and penalties, occupiers or societies do not bother to conduct regular maintenance of the fire prevention systems installed in their buildings.

The provisions contained in the Code regarding the Fire Prevention, Life Safety and Fire Protection should be adopted by State Government, local bodies, Public works department, other government construction departments and other construction agencies.

- The existing guidelines established by the international and national building codes relating to fire safety and protection should be complied with a stringent hand.
- Indian Laws on this particular subject should bring at par with International Building and Fire Safety guidelines.
- Authorities should keep a check and time to time make a survey whether International standards and legal principles relating to Fire Safety and Protection are applied in India or not.
- A survey should also be done to find out the fire or ignition source, reasons for fire spread, reasons for life and property losses due to unwanted consequences of fire and will try to find out effective solutions to avoid such kind of accidents in future.