

WORLD

India rejects Emirates' \$100 million for flood aid

MUMBAI, INDIA

Country can help itself, New Delhi says, but pride or politics may be factors

BY AYESHA VENKATARAMAN,
SUHASINI RAJ
AND MARIA ABI-HABIB

After devastating floods killed more than 400 people and engulfed entire towns in a southern state of India, the United Arab Emirates offered \$100 million to help the recovery.

The Indian government's response: Thanks, but no thanks.

Indian officials, in turning down the offer in the past week, said the country had a longstanding policy of relying on domestic resources, which they insist are adequate. Since a giant tsunami hit India's southern coast in 2004, killing at least 10,000 people, they say, the central government has built up a disaster relief agency, modeling it on the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the United States.

But many critics, while commending India's government for a quick response to the flooding disaster this month in the southern state of Kerala, worry that it has not committed nearly enough money to help Kerala rebuild.

The government has promised \$85 million for the recovery from the floods, the worst in Kerala since 1924. This is not only less than the amount offered by the United Arab Emirates, it is a tiny fraction of the \$3 billion in damage estimated by Kerala's finance minister, Thomas Isaac.

The floodwaters have receded in recent days, leaving astonishing devastation. In addition to more than 400 deaths, 1.8 million people were displaced and entire towns and major public works were submerged, including the state's main international airport.

"The government of India deeply appreciates offers from several countries, including from foreign governments, to assist in relief and rehabilitation efforts after the tragic floods," Raveesh Kumar, a spokesman for the Ministry of External Affairs, said Wednesday. "In line with the existing policy, the government is committed to meeting the requirements for relief and rehabilitation through domestic efforts."

The government has asked individuals and international foundations that want to contribute to do so through the existing relief funds run by India's prime minister or the chief minister of Kerala, which allows them to control how the money is spent.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

A rescue in the Indian state of Kerala, where the estimated damage is \$3 billion.