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Operation Amistad: India's Earthquake Relief for Venezuela

28 June 2026 · **IR** · **GS2** · **GS3**

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Operation Amistad: India's Earthquake Relief for Venezuela

28 June 2026 · 3 min read ·

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WHY IN NEWS

On June 26, 2026, India launched **Operation Amistad**, a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission, to aid Venezuela after two powerful earthquakes near Caracas killed hundreds and injured thousands.

The word “amistad” means **friendship** in Spanish, signalling the spirit of the mission. India joined the relief effort within days of the disaster, reinforcing its self-image as a **First Responder** and a net relief provider in the Global South.

WHAT HAPPENED

Two powerful earthquakes, of approximately magnitude 7.2 and 7.5, struck near Caracas, Venezuela’s capital. According to acting President Delcy Rodriguez, the death toll rose to nearly 589, with close to 2,980 people injured, alongside widespread destruction of buildings and infrastructure.

Two **Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 Globemaster** transport aircraft departed for Venezuela on June 26, 2026, carrying a 41-member rescue and medical **contingent** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/contingent/>) and relief material.

What India Sent

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COMPONENT	DETAILS
Aircraft	Two IAF C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift transports
Personnel	A 41-member contingent, including an Indian medical task force and an Army Field Hospital unit
Relief supplies	Around 30 tons of relief material
Medical aid	About 6 tons of medicines and medical equipment
Field hospitals	Two BHISHM cube portable hospitals

The BHISHM Cube

BHISHM stands for **Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri**. It is an indigenous, rapidly deployable, modular (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/modular/>) field hospital developed under Project Aarogya Maitri. Each set of cubes can deliver advanced trauma care, emergency surgeries and intensive care for up to 200 patients, and can be air-dropped or transported quickly to disaster zones. BHISHM has become a flagship of India's HADR and health diplomacy.

INDIA AS A FIRST RESPONDER

Operation Amistad continues a consistent pattern of India reaching disaster zones swiftly, regardless of geography or geopolitics (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/geopolitics/>).

OPERATION	YEAR	CRISIS
Operation Dost	2023	Earthquake in Turkey and Syria
Operation Karuna	2023	Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar
Operation Brahma	2025	Earthquake in Myanmar
Operation Amistad	2026	Earthquakes in Venezuela

This record draws on India's civilisational ethos of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the world is one family) and aligns with India's positioning as a voice of the Global South.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

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Disaster diplomacy is a powerful form of **soft power**. By being among the first to respond, India builds goodwill, deepens **bilateral** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>) ties and demonstrates the reach of its strategic airlift and medical capabilities. Venezuela, a major oil producer in Latin America, is a region where India seeks to expand its diplomatic and energy footprint, so the gesture carries long-term strategic value.

The way forward lies in institutionalising HADR: pre-positioning relief stockpiles, scaling BHISHM cube production, training rapid-response teams, and coordinating with **multilateral** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/multilateral/>) platforms so that ad hoc operations evolve into a standing, predictable capability. Reflecting the Government of India's stand, such assistance is offered as a sovereign humanitarian partner without conditions.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 (International Relations): India's foreign policy, soft power, disaster diplomacy, Global South engagement, India and Latin America.

GS Paper 3 (Disaster Management, Security): HADR, role of armed forces in disaster relief, net security provider.

Prelims pointers:

- Operation Amistad: relief mission for Venezuela (2026); "amistad" means friendship.
- BHISHM = Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri (modular field hospital).
- C-17 Globemaster: IAF strategic airlift aircraft.
- Sequence of HADR operations: Dost, Karuna, Brahma, Amistad.

Mains question: "India's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations have become an instrument of its soft power and Global South diplomacy." Discuss with examples. (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Operation Amistad: India's HADR mission launched on June 26, 2026, to aid earthquake-hit Venezuela. "Amistad" is Spanish for friendship.

Earthquakes: Around magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 near Caracas; nearly 589 dead and about 2,980 injured.

BHISHM Cube: Indigenous modular field hospital under Project Aarogya Maitri; treats up to 200 patients with trauma care, surgery and ICU support.

C-17 Globemaster: Heavy-lift transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force used for strategic airlift and HADR.

HADR lineage: Operation Dost (Turkey-Syria, 2023), Operation Karuna (Myanmar, 2023), Operation Brahma (Myanmar, 2025), Operation Amistad (Venezuela, 2026).

Guiding ethos: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world is one family.

Sources: Deccan Herald (<https://www.deccanherald.com>), *ANI News* (<https://www.aninews.in>), *News On Air* (<https://newsonair.gov.in>)

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