Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

What is the issue?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the launch of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- This happened at the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in New York recently.

What it proposes to do?

- CDRI is to be seen as an **international knowledge platform.**
- Here, countries can collaborate to make their existing and new infrastructure strong enough to withstand natural disasters.
- It is the fruition of at least **3 years of discussions** that India has had with more than 40 countries on this subject.
- It tries to bring countries together to share and learn from the one another's experiences to protect their infrastructure against disasters.
- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is operating as the interim secretariat of CDRI as of now.

What is the need to protect infrastructure?

- Many countries, including India, have over the years developed robust disaster management practices that have sharply reduced human casualties in a disaster.
- However, the **economic costs of a disaster** remain huge, mainly due to the damage caused to big infrastructure.
- A World Bank estimate - Cyclone Fani which hit Odisha in May 2019, caused damage to the tune of $4 billion.
- Kerala government's report - The losses in the Kerala floods in 2018 could be in excess of $4.4 billion.
- In the US, there were 10 climate change disasters in 2019 in which losses exceeded $1 billion.

What could be done to protect infrastructure?

- Many developing countries are still building its basic infrastructure and many developed ones are in the process of replacing old infrastructure.
- Future infrastructure should take into account the risks arising out of the

increased frequency and intensity of adverse impacts of climate change.
- Existing infrastructure would need to be retrofitted to make them more resilient.
- Disaster-proofing a project would involve changes in design, and use of newer technologies.
- These involve additional costs which are only a fraction of the losses that a disaster can bring.

What is the need for an international forum?

- Disaster preparedness and infrastructure creation are largely national endeavours.
- However, modern infrastructure is also a web of networked systems, not always confined to national boundaries.
- Damage to any one node can have cascading impacts on the entire network.
- This will result in loss of livelihoods and disrupts the economic activity in places far away from the site of a disaster.
- To make entire networks resilient is the main thought behind CDRI.
- The platform is not meant to plan or execute infrastructure projects nor finance infrastructure projects.

What will CDRI do?

- It will seek to identify and promote best practices, provide access to capacity building.
- It will work towards standardisation of designs, processes and regulations relating to infrastructure creation and management.
- It may identify and estimate the risks to, and from, large infrastructure in the event of different kinds of disasters in member countries.
- It may have countries, organisations like UN bodies, financial institutions, and other groups working on disaster management as its members.
- It seeks to help member countries integrate disaster management policies in all their activities.
- It will also help them in setting up institutions and regulatory provisions to ensure creation of resilient infrastructure, and identify and use affordable finance and technology.

Is there any connection between CDRI and BRI?

- CDRI is seen as India’s response to the Belt Road Initiative (BRI), China’s ongoing programme to recreate the ancient Silk Route trading links.
- China is building massive new land and maritime infrastructure in several countries.

- India and some other nations view this as an attempt by China to use its economic and military heft to usurp strategic assets in other countries.
- Unlike BRI, CDRI is not an attempt by India to create or fund infrastructure projects in other countries.
- Having said that, international initiatives like these are not without any strategic or diplomatic objective.

Is there any connection between CDRI and ISA?

- ISA is a treaty-based organisation that aims at a collective effort to promote the deployment of solar energy across the world.
- Its objective is to mobilise more than $1 trillion into solar power by 2030, and to deploy over 1,000 GW of solar generation capacity in member countries by that time.
- India hosts ISA, with its headquarters in Gurgaon.
- The CDRI secretariat too would be based in New Delhi.
- While it is not envisioned to take the shape of a treaty-based organisation, CDRI can be seen as complementing ISA's efforts.
- ISA is about climate change mitigation - deployment of more solar energy would bring down the reliance on fossil fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- While CDRI, on the other hand, is about adapting to climate change, a need that is inevitable.

What is India's aim?

- With these two initiatives, India is seeking to obtain a leadership role, globally, in matters related to climate change.
- CDRI is more than just a climate change initiative.
- It does not matter whether the infrastructure is risk from climate-induced disasters or those taking place due to geophysical reasons, like earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides or tsunamis.
- The infrastructure needs to be strengthened to cope with all these.

Source: The Indian Express

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