Disaster Management - Cyclone Gaja

Why in news?

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Recently, Cyclone Gaja made its landfall between Nagapattinam and Vedaranyam in Tamil Nadu.

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How prepared was the State?

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- Tamil Nadu was more prepared than before to deal with Cyclone Gaja.
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- More than 15 years ago, efforts were on to professionalise disaster management through a dedicated national and State organisation.
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- It appears to be paying off, with bureaucracies acquiring higher efficiency in terms of early warning and impact mitigation.
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- The National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project was started by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
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- This has been working to reduce the impact of such catastrophic events on Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.
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- Notably, these are classified as States with higher vulnerability; most western coastal States are in the next category.
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What were the impact and the State response?

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- Cyclone Gaja took a toll of at least 45 lives.
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- The severe cyclonic storm damaged infrastructure, property and agriculture.
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- It has affected some southern districts, felling tens of thousands of trees and also 30,000 electricity poles along the coast.
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- It also hit residents in some central Kerala districts.
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- State Disaster Management Authority issued a stream of alerts ahead of the cyclone.
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- It helped coastal residents move to camps and adopt safety measures.
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- State's measures after the cyclone, to clear roads, remove fallen trees and repair power infrastructure and communications, helped restore some stability.
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- Tamil Nadu’s political parties have acted in a mature manner, keeping partisan criticism aside the relief and rehabilitation works.
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- The government has to now secure without delay the financial relief.
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- Rs. 10 lakh has been promised for families of the dead, besides the compensation for lost crops, trees and livestock.
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- Also, provision of emergency health intervention and rehabilitation assistance to rebuild lives has to be ensured.
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What is the way ahead?

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- India’s coastline experiences a lower frequency of tropical cyclones compared to many other regions.
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- But the loss of life and destruction is much higher.
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- Coastal districts must thus continue to strengthen resilience against extreme weather events.
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- They have to focus on reducing the hazard through policies to upgrade

infrastructure and housing.
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- States have to expand resilient housing, build better storm shelters and create financial mechanisms for insurance and compensation.
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Source: The Hindu

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