Mission Kakatiya - A Model to Address Water Scarcity

What is the issue?

With growing environmental distress, policymakers must adopt best eco-management practices to address water crisis.

What are the existing water scarcity issues in India?

- **Chennai -**In Chennai, more than 30 waterbodies of significance have disappeared in the past century.
- Concretization or the increase in paved surfaces has affected the percolation of rainwater into the soil, thereby depleting groundwater levels to a point of no return.
- In a report last year, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) called the Chennai floods of 2015 a "man-made disaster", a pointer to how the encroachment of lakes and river floodplains has driven India's sixth largest city to this ineluctable situation.
- The Chennai floods are a symbol of consistent human failings and poor urban design which are common to most urban centers in India if not urban centers across the world.
- **Bengaluru -** In Bengaluru, 15 lakes have lost their ecological character in less than five years according to a High Court notice to the Bruhat Bengaluru MahanagaraPalike, the city's administrative body responsible for civic amenities and some infrastructural assets.
- The lakes, which are now encroached areas, find use as a bus stand, a stadium and, quite ironically, as an office of the Pollution Control Board.
- **Telangana -**In Telangana, the byzantine network of tanks and lakes built by the Kakatiya dynasty has disappeared over the years.

How Telangana's Mission Kakatiyaaddress water crisis?

- In Telangana, "tanks have been the lifeline of the State because of its geographical positioning".
- The State's "topography and rainfall pattern have made tank irrigation an ideal type of irrigation by storing and regulating water flow for agricultural use".
- In 2015 Telangana Government had launched a massive rejuvenation movement in form of "Mission Kakatiya" which involves the restoration of

irrigation tanks and lakes/minor irrigation sources built by the Kakatiya dynasty.

- From the perspective of inter-generational justice, this is a move towards giving future generations in the State their rightful share of water and, therefore, a life of dignity.
- The city of Hyderabad is now moving towards a sustainable hydraulic model with some of the best minds in the country working on it.
- This model integrates six sources of water in a way that even the most underdeveloped areas of the city can have equitable access to water resources and the groundwater levels restored in order to avoid a calamity of the kind that has gripped Chennai now.

What other cities can learn from the model?

- Hyderabad and the larger state of Telangana rebuild its resilience through a combination of political will and well-designed policies such as the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme and Mission.
- Following Telangana's footsteps Bengaluru can reclaim Kundalahallilake (once a landfill) through corporate social responsibility funds in a Public Private Partnership model.
- Policymakers must give up the tendency to discount the future and of their obsession of focusing on the here and now, and start adopting sustainable policies for the future.

Source: The Hindu

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