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Civil Defence Volunteers Against Covid-19

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Why in News

More than 50,000 **Civil Defence volunteers** are assisting the local administration in implementing the **measures to contain the spread of Covid-19**.

Provisions under the **State Disaster Relief Fund** have been made by the central government for procurement of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs)** to be used by the deployed workers.

Key Points

- **All States and Union Territories barring Ladakh, Daman & Diu, and Puducherry have deployed** civil defence personnel.
 - **Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Assam** have taken the **lead** in using their services.
- The volunteers have been deployed under the **command of District Magistrates** to **assist the local administration** in implementing the Covid-19 guidelines and policies effectively.
- **Contributions of the Volunteers:**
 - **Supplementing the local administration in conducting surveillance of suspected and confirmed** Covid-19 cases by working as rapid response teams.
 - **Manning hunger helplines** and **assisting elderly citizens**.
 - Helping in the **maintenance of essential supplies**, like packing and home distribution of ration and medicines.
 - **Supplementing health workers** and also carrying out **community awareness drives** on social distancing and hygiene practices.
 - **Distributing PPEs, masks and sanitisers**.
 - **Setting up community kitchens** and **shelters for migrant workers** and other stranded persons.

Civil Defence

- Civil Defence measures are **designed to deal with immediate emergency conditions, protect the public and restore vital services and facilities that have been destroyed or damaged by disaster.**
- These operate under the **Civil Defence Act, 1968** and associated rules and regulations.
 - The Act was **amended in 2009** and in **2010, disaster management** was included as an additional role.
 - It is **applicable throughout the nation.**
- Although it is a Central law, **Section 4 of the Civil Defence Act empowers State governments to raise corps at the local administration level as per their requirement.**

The **District Magistrate, District Collector or Deputy Commissioner** is designated as **Controller of the Civil Defence.**
- **Objectives:**
 - To save the life, to minimize loss of property, to maintain continuity of production and to keep high up the morale of the people.
 - During times of war and emergencies, to guard the hinterland, support the Armed forces, mobilise the citizens and help civil administration.
 - It not only includes the management of damage against conventional weapons but also the management of threat perceptions against Nuclear weapons, Biological & Chemical Warfare and natural and man-made disasters.
- It is **primarily organised on a voluntary basis except for a small nucleus of paid staff and establishment** which is augmented during emergencies.
- **Central Financial Assistance:** The central government **reimburses 25% of the expenditure (50% for North-eastern states except for Assam)** incurred by the State Government on the authorized items of Civil Defence for raising, training and equipping of Civil Defence Service.

Source: TH