



BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise -2020

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Why in News

The 2nd **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** Disaster Management Exercise was conducted (11-13 February, 2020) in **Bhubaneswar**, Odisha.

- The focus of the **2nd edition of Exercise** is on **heritage structures' protection**.
- The **first edition of the BIMSTEC DMEx** was also **hosted by India in 2017** with the focus on testing the region's preparedness and resilience towards effective activation of inter-Governmental interaction/dialogue/agreements for immediate deployment of regional resources for disaster response.

Key Points

- The exercise seeks to provide a platform for member states to evaluate existing capabilities, share best emergency response practices, **improve emergency preparedness and strengthen regional response mechanisms, to conduct risk assessment** in the context of **cultural heritage sites at the time of disasters and to test the multi-stakeholders' coordination** in a disaster scenario **involving international, national, state, district and local agencies**.
- **Participants** in the exercise include BIMSTEC members except Bhutan and Thailand along with other global institutions like **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration Cultural Property (ICCROM)** etc.
- The **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** is building the capacity of its forces to play the role of **first responder** at heritage sites, which are vulnerable to disasters such as **earthquake, floods, cyclones** and **tsunami** across India.

- **Reasons for Focus on the Heritage Sites:** In the backdrop of recent losses suffered in an earthquake in Nepal(2015), damages to Heritage Sites in Gujarat earthquake (2001), the need was felt to protect the Heritage Sites during disasters and build the capacity of NDRF personnel.

According to **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** in India, there could be 11 lakh sites in towns and villages out of which close to 10,000 sites and buildings are protected and about 70,000 sites have heritage value.

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration Cultural Property

- The creation of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration Cultural Property (ICCROM) took place as a result of a proposal at the UNESCO General Conference held in New Delhi, in 1956.
- In 1959, the Centre was established in Rome, Italy.
- India is a member (1961).
- It is an intergovernmental organization which works with its members to promote the **conservation of all forms of cultural heritage, in every region of the world.**
- It operates in the spirit of the **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).**

Declaration states that “Respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security.”

International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)

- The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) was established in 1991.
- It is a global network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the **United Nations** umbrella.
- INSARAG deals with **Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)** related issues, aiming to establish minimum international standards for international coordination in earthquake response based on its Guidelines.

India and Disaster Management

- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):** Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the establishment of an **International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** in New Delhi.

- The **National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)** organized the **1st International Conference on “Landslides Risk Reduction and Resilience”** in November, 2019 in New Delhi.
- India has been at the forefront of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts by hosting the **South Asian Annual Disaster Management Exercise (SAADMEx)** and the **Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR)**.
- India has also offered its expertise and capabilities in DRR such as the **South Asia satellite, GSAT-9, and the Tsunami Early Warning Centre to other countries.**
- Disaster Management was one of the important Agenda items the BIMSTEC leaders deliberated upon during the **Goa BRICS Summit in October 2016** where BIMSTEC leaders were the Special Invitees.

Source:TH