



India First Responder In Indian Ocean Region

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Why in News

Recently, the **Defence Minister of India** addressed the **5th World Congress on Disaster Management (WCDM)** held in New Delhi.

- At the congress the Raksha Mantri asserted that, time and again India has proved itself to be “**first responder**” in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- The emerging concept of India as a “first responder” reflects the **country’s growing capability and increasing willingness to assume the role of a leading power**.

World Congress on Disaster Management

- It is a unique **initiative of Disaster management initiatives and convergence society** to bring researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the world in the same platform to discuss various challenging issues of disaster risk management.
- Its mission is **to promote interaction of science, policy and practices to enhance understanding of risks and advance actions** for reducing risks and building resilience to disasters.

Key Points

- **India, As First Responder:**

- **Underlying Vision:** India's vision for the Indian Ocean encapsulated by the concept of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**. SAGAR has both distinct and inter-related elements such as:
 - Deepening **economic and security cooperation** among the littoral states.
 - **Enhancing capacities** to safeguard land and maritime territories.
 - Working towards **sustainable regional development**.
 - **Blue Economy** and promoting collective action to deal with non-traditional threats like natural disasters, piracy and terrorism.
- **Enabling Factors:** India's unique position in the **Indian Ocean Region**, complemented by a capability of the Armed Forces, enables it to contribute significantly in **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** situations.

By contributing its resources to prevent or mitigate regional and international crises, **India is demonstrating its commitment as a responsible actor in the international order.**
- **Need: Challenging geo-political landscape** and the traditional and non-traditional threats including natural calamities like **Covid-19** faced by the world.
 - Whether it is a **natural catastrophe, or a sudden financial shock**, the repercussions are often massive, with regional and global implications.
 - By taking the lead, India tries providing a public good to the **international order**, supporting smaller or less capable states in dire need of assistance.

- **Manifestation of India As First Responder:**

- **HADR Operations:** India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR co-operation and coordination with its **neighbours and friendly countries** with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities.

The Indian government and military forces have played a critical role in supporting neighbouring countries in relief operations like the

- **Building Disaster Resilience:** India taking lead and offering expertise of **Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** (DRI) to its friendly countries .

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) was first proposed by India during the 2016 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in New Delhi.

- **Expatriate Evacuation Operations: Operation Rahat** in Yemen in 2015 when India rescued and evacuated over 6,700 persons, including over 1,940 citizens of more than 40 other countries.

- **Non-Traditional Security Challenges:**The Indian Navy has emerged as the Indian Ocean's default first responder to non-traditional security challenges.

To combat piracy in the **Gulf of Aden since 2008**, it deployed almost thirty warships that have escorted more than 1500 ships and thwarted around thirty piracy attempts.

- **Post-Conflict Relief And Rehabilitation:** India has often taken the lead in supporting countries going through post-conflict processes which require expert resources and significant funding.

For Example, India provided help to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka for post conflict recovery.

- **Refugee Flows:** Whenever people fear for their lives in South Asia, they often look up to India first. **India has consistently provided an emergency safe haven for refugee** and minority populations from across South Asia.

Way Forward

- **Leveraging Cutting-Edge Technologies:** Emerging cutting-edge technologies in the fields of space, communication, bio-engineering, bio-medics and artificial intelligence can revolutionise the way the risks of disasters are assessed and communicated through early warning.

- **Post Pandemic Assessment:** A comprehensive assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals is needed.

The new framework should emphasise on the need to incorporate new ideas in global and national strategies for the implementation of the goals.

- **Studying And Augmenting First Respondent Tradition:** The first respondent tradition must be further studied and promoted, because it reflects India's deep commitment to assume a driving role in the international order.

And it will also have to be endowed with adequate resources and capabilities for India to move even quicker and farther beyond its borders.

Source: TH