



Mains Practice Question

Q. India being a responsible regional power, should invest in regional frameworks for disaster management. Discuss the statement in light of the increasing vulnerability of the South Asia region. (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce by briefly writing India's interest in creating a regional framework for disaster management in the region.
- Discuss the vulnerability of the South Asia region to various disasters.
- Suggest some solution as a way forward.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

Introduction

- South Asia is exposed to a variety of hazards due to the geo-climatic characteristics of the region.
- From a development perspective disaster management is vital for building a more equitable and sustainable future. Making investments in prevention and preparedness is a necessary part of systematic efforts to increase resilience to disaster.
- A regional framework can help India and other regional countries to lift the social-economic conditions of their people. It can also help India build good relations with its neighbours.

Body

Vulnerability of the South Asia region to various disasters

- South Asia's geo-climatic conditions as well as its high degree of socio-economic vulnerability, makes it one of the most disaster prone regions in the world.
 - South Asian countries are typically marked by large populations, high poverty, low literacy and poor indicators of human development.
 - Poverty is widespread especially in the rural areas of Indian sub-continent.
- **Climate Change:** The monsoon carries more than 70% of South Asia's annual precipitation in a brief four-month period.
 - A poorly timed monsoon, can result in human suffering and economic loss due to either flooding or drought.
 - Cyclones are the second most commonly occurring hazard in the region.
 - Climate change has a direct effect on the monsoon pattern and cyclones occurrences in the region.
- **Active Seismic Zones:** The world's youngest mountain belt, the Himalaya and Hindu Kush, envelopes South Asia all along its northern fringe, from Afghanistan in the west to Bangladesh in the east.
 - With over 600 million people living along the fault line across the Himalayan belt, where

the earthquake exposure is very high.

- **Tsunami Challenge:** In the South Asia Seas region, major population centers live on key fault lines and in coastal areas that are exposed to hazards like Tsunami in 2004.
- **Lack of Coordination:** Ineffective regional disaster relief mechanisms result in an uncoordinated relief effort which hampers disaster recovery process.

Way Forward

- **Utilising existing Regional Disaster Relief Mechanisms** in the South Asia region.
 - Institutions such as SAARC institutions (SAARC Disaster Management Centre, South Asia Rapid Response to Natural Disasters), Bimstec Centre for Weather and Climate can be utilised effectively.
- **Risk Identification:** Any effective strategy to manage disaster risk must begin with an identification of the factors that cause disasters.
 - Hazard mapping of the region will serve as the base layer of information and provides data on the probability of occurrence and intensity of a hazard event.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Reducing disaster risk calls for all stakeholders to alter their perceptions and prioritize resilience in a country's planning and development efforts.
 - In this context, SAR should devise and implement a regional disaster risk reduction mechanism based on Sendai Framework.

Conclusion

- With climate uncertainty, humanitarian emergencies in the South Asia region are poised to grow. India must invest in regional frameworks for disaster management and take the lead in setting up a road map for greater cooperation.
- Building capacities through training and joint exercises and coordinating comparative advantages for collective action will help India leverage goodwill among its neighbours through its disaster relief programmes.