GS-III: Delhi diplomacy to fight disaster.

News

While speaking at the UN Secretary General’s Climate Action Summit PM Modi had announced the launch of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure:

- Each time a natural disaster occurs anywhere in the world, countries try to provide immediate relief, but there is no focus on building disaster-resilient Infrastructure.
- CDRI could fill this gap of funds and technology and help developing countries to build disaster-resilient Infrastructure.
- For instance, India is a world leader in preventing human deaths due to disasters. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) has praised India’s zero casualty approach and playing a pioneering role model for global community for drawing up a national and local strategy to reduce disaster losses and risks.
- CDRI is an attempt to bring countries together to share and learn from the experiences of one another to protect their key infrastructure: highways, railways, power stations, communication lines, water channels, even housing against disasters.

Need to protect infrastructure:

- Many countries, including India, have over the years developed robust disaster management practices that have helped in sharply reducing human casualties in a disaster.
- However, the economic costs of a disaster remain huge, mainly due to the damage caused to big infrastructure.
- According to a recent estimate by the World Bank, Cyclone Fani, which hit Odisha in May this year, caused damage to the tune of $4 billion.

Moving away with basic infrastructure:

- Much of the developing world is still building its basic infrastructure.
- Many developed countries are also in the process of replacing old infrastructure that has completed their lifetimes.
- Future infrastructure needs to take into account the heightened risks arising out of the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and other adverse impacts of climate change.
- Even existing infrastructure would need to be retrofitted to make them more resilient.

International Forum:

- Disaster preparedness and infrastructure creation are largely national endeavors. However, modern infrastructure is also a web of networked systems, not always confined to national boundaries.
- There are increasing numbers of trans-national and trans-continental highways and railways; transmission lines carry electricity across countries; assets on a river are shared.
- Damage to any one node can have cascading impacts on the entire network, resulting in
loss of livelihoods and disruption in economic activity in places far away from the site of a disaster.

**CDRI and Belt Road Initiative:**

- CDRI has sometimes been seen as India’s response to the Belt Road Initiative, China’s ongoing multi-billion-dollar programme to recreate the ancient Silk Route trading links.
- China is building massive new land and maritime infrastructure in several countries.
- India and some other nations view this as an attempt by China to use its economic and military heft to usurp strategic assets in other countries.
- Unlike BRI, CDRI is not an attempt by India to create or fund infrastructure projects in other countries.
- Having said that, international initiatives like these are not without any strategic or diplomatic objective.

**CDRI and Solar Alliance:**

- A more relevant comparison of CDRI can, however be made with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) that India launched at the climate meeting in Paris in 2015.
- ISA, which has evolved into a treaty-based organisation with more than 50 countries already signed up, aims at a collective effort to promote the deployment of solar energy across the world.
- Its objective is to mobilise more than $1 trillion into solar power by 2030, and to deploy over 1,000 GW of solar generation capacity in member countries by that time.
- India hosts ISA, with its headquarters in Gurgaon. The CDRI secretariat too would be based in New Delhi.
- ISA is about climate change mitigation deployment of more solar energy would bring down the reliance on fossil fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- With these two initiatives, India is seeking to obtain a leadership role, globally, in matters related to climate change.