Gearing up for floods during coronavirus pandemic

Part of: GS-III- Disaster management (PT-MAINS-PERSONALITY TEST)

The National Disaster Response Force is preparing to face the twin challenges in many States. With monsoon around the corner, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is preparing to face the twin challenge of coronavirus (COVID-19) and floods in different parts of the country. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a normal monsoon, which is expected to hit Kerala on June 1.

Action plan

Over the past week, the NDRF has been working on an action plan to meet all possible exigencies. The top brass has been briefing the field formations on measures to be taken. The organisation has been in constant touch with the IMD and the local administration in the respective States.

Assam, which witnesses heavy rains and flash floods during monsoon, leading to several deaths and displacement of lakhs of people in the affected areas, had asked for monsoon pre-deployment of NDRF teams.

Low pressure

The NDRF has taken note of the latest IMD warning of the likely formation of a low pressure area over the south Andaman Sea and the neighbourhood around April 30, which is likely to intensify into a depression during the subsequent 48 hours, triggering moderate and heavy to extreme rainfall in isolated areas.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, NDRF teams in several States joined the local administration in implementing the preventive measures and distributing essentials, including medical supplies. They also stepped in to alleviate the problems faced by thousands of stranded migrant labourers, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

NDRF

About NDRF:

Defined in Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act).

It is a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.

Constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDFR) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.

National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) was renamed as National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) with the enactment of the Disaster Management Act in 2005.
What is it to be used for?

NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.

For projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, i.e., measures aimed at reducing the risk, impact or effect of a disaster or threatening disaster situation a separate fund called National Disaster Mitigation Fund has to be constituted.

Sources of Financing NDRF:

Financed through the levy of a cess on certain items, chargeable to excise and customs duty, and approved annually through the Finance Bill.

The requirement for funds beyond what is available under the NDRF is met through general budgetary resources.

Currently, a National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD) is levied to finance the NDRF and additional budgetary support is provided as and when necessary.

A provision also exists in the DM Act to encourage any person or institution to make a contribution.

Key features of NDRF:

Located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”.

Monitoring: Department of Agriculture and Cooperation under Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) monitors calamities associated with drought, hailstorms, pest attacks and cold wave/frost while rest of the natural calamities are monitored by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audits the accounts of NDRF.