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Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

Why in news?

An International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRI) will be inaugurated here tomorrow.

Highlights:

- The two-day workshop is being organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and in partnership with the Global Commission on Adaptation, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.
- The workshop aims to
 - identify good practices of disaster risk management in key infrastructure sectors ii) identify specific areas and pathways for collaborative research on DRI (Transport, Energy, Telecom and Water)
 - discuss and co-create the broad contours of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) as well as a notional roll-out plan for the next three years, and iv) build a forum for members to work on areas of common interest and make specific commitments.
- It will bring together countries from different parts of the world, multilateral development banks, UN agencies, academia and research

institutions, the private sector, academics and policy think tanks to discuss and collaborate on promoting policies and practices towards achieving disaster resilience of large infrastructure systems (transport, telecom, energy, water). This will also be a great opportunity to learn from the unique experiences of different countries.

- Various international agreements have also reiterated the importance and long-term benefits of investing in resilient infrastructure. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), 2015-2030, which is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, identifies investing in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for resilience and to build back better in reconstruction as priorities for action towards reducing disaster risk.
- Similarly, Goal 9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizes disaster resilient infrastructure as a crucial driver of economic growth and development.
- The first International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRRI 2018) was held in January 2018.
- This workshop will further build upon some of the ideas generated at the IWDRRI 2018 as a crucial milestone towards the establishment of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- The CDRI is envisaged as a knowledge exchange and capacity development partnership. India announced the creation of a CDRI soon after the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was held in New Delhi in 2016.

About Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction:

- Asian ministerial conference for disaster risk reduction (AMCDRR) is an intergovernmental conference held to discuss disaster mitigation.
- Its inaugural meeting was held in New Delhi, in November 2016, after the introduction of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- The conference has been held seven times in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).
- The motive of such conference was to mitigate the disaster risks. After the Indian Ocean tsunami came in 2004, India was among the five countries that were very badly impacted and took prime initiative to endorse for creating new laws for disaster risk management.

Objectives

- Transforming the commitments made in Sendai by the governments into visible action.
- Deciding the direction for implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework.

Agenda

A ten point agenda was set.

- First, development projects will be built to appropriate standards. The new infrastructure should be planned under standards of disaster safety and technologies of disaster resilient .
 - Second, insurance coverage to all should be there, whether poor or rich. The Suraksha Bima Yojana acts as a tool to give risk insurance to millions.
 - Third, to ensure greater involvement and leadership of women in disaster risk management.
 - Fourth, is to identify Seismic zones based on high and low risk and map the risks globally.
 - Fifth, to map and exchange expertise, technology and resources in a collaborative way that would go a long way in maximizing the collective impact.
 - Sixth, to make universities for disaster issues in coastal region and the hill cities.
 - Seventh to utilize the social media in transforming the disaster response.
 - Eight, to enhance local capacity based on using the best traditional practices.
 - Ninth is learning from every disaster. Research should be done and papers should be released so that more preparedness can be kept when same kind of tragedy happens again.
 - Tenth, bring about greater cooperation among international response to disasters.
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Deals to rules

- Philosophers wondering why a benevolent god created fear often hear from other philosophers that some fear is conducive — if not essential — to good behaviour.
- Not creating the fear of immediate, automatic and borrower-blind consequences for default is one reason why India's credit to GDP ratio is a low 50 per cent (Arunachal is 1 per cent, Bihar is 17 per cent, 100 per cent is the average for rich countries).
- But over the last three years, the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the RBI's Revised Framework for Resolution of Stressed Assets (RFRSA, issued on February 12 last year) have begun to show impressive results in recognition (we know the truth), deterrence (defaults are reducing), resolution (defaults are being cured) and speed (defaults are being cured faster). This is great news for financial inclusion of the small, honest, and non-politically connected.
- India's new policy regime for defaults — IBC plus RFRSA — ensures a time-bound exploration of all business, capital and ownership restructuring options before liquidation (an outcome in which everybody loses and therefore nobody wants).
- It is working-bad loans went from 2.4 per cent in 2007 to 11.6 per cent in 2018 but may now be down to 10.2 per cent. And the direct impact of RFRSA lies in annualised reduction in bad loans for recent quarters being the highest in recent years with a huge acceleration in two-way mobility between standard and non-standard loan classifications.
- Of the 82 accounts resolved by the IBC, the average realisation by financial creditors was 48 per cent and average time taken for resolution was 310 days (versus World Bank estimates of 27 per cent and 1,580 days).
- RFRSA fixed birth defects of past RBI interventions like SDR, S4A, JLF, CAP, etc by requiring weekly reporting by banks on all accounts in default anytime during the week with exposure greater than Rs 50 million, requiring all lenders to initiate steps to cure a default with any lender, requiring an independent credit opinion for resolution plans, and setting a 180-day implementation deadline for resolution plans in loans greater than Rs 2,000 crore. Contrary to myth, the

February 12 RFRSA circular doesn't apply to small borrowers.

- litigation has choked the pipeline with resolution for only three of the RBI's first IBC list of 12, only 63 of the total 1,484 cases admitted under the IBC have the highly desirable outcome of being withdrawn under Section 12A (withdrawal from insolvency prior to expression of interest stage with consent of 90 per cent of lenders), recovery rates are still lower than global averages, and 31 per cent of the 898 ongoing insolvency cases at the end of 2018 have breached the 270-day deadline.
 - But the recent Supreme Court judgement upholding the constitutional validity of the IBC, clarifying the relative position of secured and unsecured creditors, and holding the line on Section 29A (defaulter rebidding restrictions) means that the IBC is not a passing shower but climate change. Consequently, action under Section 12A withdrawals is accelerating, a market for corporate control is emerging, and more equity is being raised (not borrowed or stolen).
 - China can teach us a lot about labour markets but not about banking. Their share of bank lending to the private sector has shrunk by 80 per cent since 2013, total bad loans may exceed \$3 trillion, and total debt now exceeds 300 per cent of GDP (most loans went to construction because China produced three times as much cement between 2012 and 2016 as the US did in the entire 20th century).
 - While China's treatment of defaulters is tempting — they recently expanded restrictions on travel, buying homes, holding high-level jobs, kids school eligibility, etc for defaulters — these practices are inconsistent with a democracy.
 - Over the last three years, India's bad loan policy moving from deals to rules means the long arc of economic history is finally bending towards justice. This remarkable reform will not only recover Rs 3 lakh crore plus for banks but has hugely positive consequences for India's productivity, wages and prosperity.
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Pinaki Chandra Ghose to become India's first Lokpal

Why in news?

Former Supreme Court judge and current member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Pinaki Chandra Ghose, is likely to be India's first anti-corruption ombudsman, or Lokpal, after his name was cleared and recommended by the high-level selection committee chaired by Prime Minister.

Selection committee:

- High-level selection committee chaired by Prime Minister. Other members of the committee are Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan and eminent jurist Mukul Rohatgi.
- Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, who is part of the committee, did not attend the meeting after he was invited as "special invitee." Mr. Kharge had refused to attend earlier meetings too, protesting against his being invited as a "special invitee."
- The government was prompted to make the selection after the Supreme Court set the February-end deadline.
- The Lokpal Act, which was passed in 2013 after a nationwide anti-corruption movement, provides for setting up of **Lokpal at the centre and Lokayuktas in the States to probe corruption complaints against top functionaries and public servants, including the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers.**

Only 26% of rural toilets use twin-leach pits

Why in news?

Over the last year, a government advertisement has been preaching the benefits of the "**do gadde**" or twin-pit latrines, which would create valuable farm manure from human excreta. "**Shauchalaya ka ashirvad**," proclaims advertisement produced by the Centre's flagship sanitation scheme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

Findings of the Survey:

- This month, with the scheme claiming to be on the verge of completing toilet construction for all rural households, a government-commissioned survey shows that just over a quarter of rural toilets use this twin-pit system.
- The waste from the remainder of rural toilets could create a new sanitation nightmare harmful to health and the environment, and even pushing a new generation into manual scavenging.
- The Hindu's analysis of raw data from the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey 2018-19, shows that just 26.6% of rural households use the recommended twin-pit system to dispose of excreta from their toilets.
- Septic tanks are the most popular option, with 28% of toilets connected to a septic tank with a soak pit and 6% to a tank without a soak pit.

Twin Pit System:

- Under the twin-pit system, two pits are dug with honeycombed walls and earthen floors which allow liquid to percolate into the surrounding soil. When one pit is filled and closed off, waste flow is transferred to the second pit, allowing waste in the first pit to be converted into manure after a year or two.
- The twin pit has been promoted by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation as well as the World Health Organisation as an **in-situ sanitation system** which claims to bypass thorny issues such as caste purity, as owners will be dealing with manure, not excreta.
- With the government intensively promoting twin pits over the last two years, it is unsurprising that the highest ratio of twin pits are found in States which have only recently completed toilet construction.
- Jharkhand, which is second on the list, with almost 58% of its toilets connected to twin pits, was declared open defecation free (ODF) only late last year.
- Uttar Pradesh, which tops the list with 64% of toilets with twin pits, had made the technology mandatory for anyone who wanted to avail the government's ₹12,000 subsidy to build toilets.

Sludge management:

- For the more than 70% of toilets without twin pits, a **faecal sludge management system** is desperately needed.
 - The faecal sludge that going to be emptied, transported and treated has to be an immediate priority
 - It's not enough to connect [the toilet] to a drain if it is simply emptied out into local land or ponds. It will lead to large-scale pollution of groundwater.
 - A 2018 survey of 30 cities and towns in Uttar Pradesh by the Centre for Science and Environment found that 87% of toilet waste is dumped into water bodies and farm lands.
 - An on-site sanitation system such as a septic tank has to be emptied and cleaned out every two or three years.
 - Government is looking at technology and entrepreneurship solutions for these second order problems, but manpower is a key issue as well.
 - The same Dalit communities which have traditionally been forced into manual scavenging are likely to end up in sanitation work to clean these tanks and any newly built rural sewerage systems.
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Naval assets were put on alert

Why in news?

As tensions between India and Pakistan mounted, India put its key naval assets, including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and nuclear submarines, on operational alert, the Navy said in a statement.

Exercise to operational deployment mode:

- The major combat units of the Navy, including the Carrier Battle Group with INS Vikramaditya, nuclear submarines and scores of other ships, submarines and aircraft swiftly transited from exercise to

operational deployment mode as tensions between India and Pakistan escalated.

- The announcement is in contrast to the assertions of senior government officials that India did not undertake any escalatory mobilisation after the Balakot air strikes.
- They had consistently referred to the strikes as “**non-military pre-emptive counter-terror strikes**” and had accused Pakistan’s government of whipping up “war hysteria” in order to mislead the international community.
- At the briefings held on February 28 and March 4 and 16, the officials stressed that the Indian military had carried out no military operation post February 27, and denied reports from Pakistan that an Indian submarine had been deployed in the Arabian Sea near Pakistan.

TROPEX link:

- The deployment came amid the largest war game of the Navy, **Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX 19)**, which began on January 7 and which was planned to be concluded by March 10.
- However, the terrorist attack in Pulwama on February 14 led to the rapid redeployment of the Navy for operations in the North Arabian Sea.
- The Navy said the availability of a large number of combat-ready assets in the theatre of operations for TROPEX allowed it to expeditiously respond to the developing situation in synergy with the three services.
- The overwhelming superiority of the Indian Navy in all three dimensions forced the Pakistan Navy to remain deployed close to the **Makran coast** and not venture out in the open ocean.

About TROPEX:

- Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba will preside over the debrief of the TROPEX in Kochi on March 18th.
- About 60 ships of the Navy, 12 ships of the Coast Guard and 60 aircraft had taken part in the exercise.
- It began with a **tri-service amphibious exercise in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- This was followed by the largest coastal defence exercise, ‘**Sea Vigil**,’

on January 22 and 23, with the participation of all 13 coastal States and UTs along with all maritime stakeholders.

INS Khanderi

Why in news?

The Navy is set to induct the second Scorpene submarine Khanderi by early May, a defence source said. The remaining submarines in the series are in advanced stages of manufacturing and trials.

Ready for trials:

- Khanderi has completed all trials and is in the final stages of acceptance. It is expected to be commissioned into the Navy by end April or early May.
- Khanderi was launched into water in January 2017 and has since been undergoing a series of trials.
- Another source stated that the **fourth submarine Vela** is ready to be launched into water for trials around the same time depending on the ocean tide.

Scorpene submarines:

- Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai, is manufacturing **six Scorpene submarines** under technology transfer from Naval Group of France under a 2005 contract worth \$3.75 bn.
- After a series of delays in the project, the **first submarine of the class Kalvari** joined service in December 2017. The entire project is expected to be completed by 2020.
- The third in the Scorpene series **Karanj** which was launched in January last year is in advanced stage of trials and could be ready for induction by year end.
- The last two submarines **Vagir and Vagsheer** are in advanced stages of manufacturing on the assembly line.
- The fifth submarine is in the final stages of being booted together. The '**Boot Together**' is where the five separate sections are welded

together to form the submarine.

- Kalvari is the first modern conventional submarine inducted by the Navy in almost two decades.
 - In addition, the Navy currently operates four **German HDW class submarines** and **nine Russian Kilo class submarines**.
 - The Navy had last inducted a conventional diesel-electric submarine, **INS Sindhushastra**, procured from Russia in July 2000.
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Migration in Bengal delta

Why in news?

Economic reasons are the precipitating factor for migration in the Indian Bengal Delta that comprises the Sunderbans reveals an international study titled Deltas, Vulnerability and Climate Change: Migration and Adaptation (DECMA).

Findings of the study:

- The study also points out that there is huge gender disparity when it comes to those migrating from the region.
- The study which covers 51 blocks of districts of South and North 24 Parganas reveals that 64% people migrate because of economic reasons, unsustainable agriculture, lack of economic opportunities and debt; 28 % of the migration from the region is for social reasons and about 7% for environmental reasons like cyclones and flooding.
- The study, held between 2014 and 2018 focusing on three **deltas Ganga Brahmaputra Meghna Delta (India and Bangladesh) Volta (Ghana) and Mahanadi (India)** looks into the aspect of climate change, adaptation and migration in these deltas
- People surveyed during the study could not relate to reduced agricultural productivity, increased salinity and change in rainfall pattern as environmental reason for their migration.
- Only in cases of extreme events like flooding and cyclones resulting in

loss of livelihood, did the locals say their migration was due to environmental reasons.

Gender Disparity:

- When it comes to migration in the Indian Bengal Delta, the study finds a huge gender disparity, with men outnumbering women by almost five times.
- It shows that of the people migrating 83% are men and only 17 % are women. While most of the **men migrate due to economic reasons, women do so, driven by mostly social factors.**
- The DECMA report also finds that most migrants both in case of men and women are young, in the age group of 20-30 years.
- In the Sunderbans there are villages where most of the men have migrated for work and the responsibility of the family and agriculture falls on the women.
- Even though the women are doing all the work back home, they have little freedom to take decisions on their own and have to consult their men over telephone for any major decision.

Migration Trend:

- In terms of the destination of migrations, the study finds that 51% of migration from the Indian Bengal Delta is to other areas of the State particularly to the city of Kolkata, 10% to Maharashtra, 9% to Tamil Nadu, 7% Kerala and 6% to Gujarat.
- It shows that 57% of migration is seasonal, where people move once or twice a year; 19% is circular where those migrating move thrice a year irrespective of reasons and 24% permanent where people intend to stay for at least six months in the place they are migrating to.
- According to experts behind the study, **one of the reasons for migration is failed adaptation in the areas which are under stress due to climate change.**

Vulnerable areas:

- In the study, experts also map the **climate change hot spots** and highest risk areas of Sunderbans based on an analysis of climate change hazards.
 - The areas of Gosaba, Basanti, Kultali, Sagar, Kakdwip, Namkhana, Canning and Mathurapur (all in South 24 Parganas) have high levels of agriculture dependency and so are sensitive to climate hazards such as flood and salinity.
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New Hydro Policy

Why in news?

While the government's decision to re-classify large hydroelectric projects as renewable energy will certainly help the sector, the move will also go a long way in meeting the targets set by it for the sector, according to analysts.

New Policy:

- Earlier this month, the Union Cabinet approved a new hydroelectricity policy that, among other things, included **large hydro projects within the ambit of renewable energy**.
- Prior to the policy, only small hydro projects of a capacity of less than 25 MW were treated as renewable energy. Large hydro projects were treated as a separate source of energy.
- India's renewable energy sector had an installed capacity of 75,055.92 MW as of February 2019, according to data with the Central Electricity Authority.
- This made up about 21.4% of the overall energy mix, with the rest coming from thermal, nuclear and large hydro sources.
- With the inclusion of large hydro in renewable energy, the energy mix changes drastically.
- Renewable energy capacity would now be 1,20,455.14 MW or 34.4% of the overall energy mix.

No additional resources

- It must be noted that this is a purely cosmetic change. No additional resources have been created through this policy. It is a reclassification of existing capacity.
- The policy has meant a drastic change in the renewable energy mix as well. Whereas earlier, wind energy contributed nearly 50% of all renewable energy capacity, it will now make up only 29.3%. Similarly, solar energy's share will fall from 34.68% to 21.61%. The hydro sector, however, will see its share grow from just over 6% to over 41%.

Huge imbalance:

- There has been a huge imbalance in the thermal-hydro mix for the last few years because of a sharp growth in thermal and complete stagnation in hydro.
- The basic idea is to ramp up hydro because it provides grid stability which a renewable source like wind and solar do not. The key reasoning seems to be providing grid stability and a better energy mix.
- Other analysts, however, say that the government has additional reasons for bringing in such a re-classification, which have more to do with the renewable energy targets it set for itself. India is still pretty far from reaching the 175 GW renewable energy target by 2022.
- So, apart from the good to the sector, one main reason for the re-classification of hydro as renewables is to add all that capacity to the renewable energy kitty.

Impact on PSUs:

- Other commentators pointed out that another benefit from the policy could be the effect on the stock prices of State-run hydroelectric companies such as NHPC and SJVN at a point when the government is looking to sell its stake in these companies.
- NHPC, however, has formally denied that it has been approached by

any company looking to buy stake in it.

India-Maldives

Why in news?

India and the Maldives discussed measures to strengthen bilateral ties and collaborate in the fields of defence, development cooperation, capacity building and health as External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held talks with the country's top leadership, including her Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid.

EAM Maldives Visit:

- Swaraj arrived Male on a two-day visit, the first full-fledged bilateral trip from India to the island nation after the government of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power in November last year.
- Swaraj and Maldivian Foreign Minister Shahid reviewed progress on important bilateral issues, including implementation of agreed outcomes of President Solih's visit to India last year.
- They agreed on a broad spectrum of issues for further collaboration, including development cooperation and enhancing people-to-people contact.
- Solih visited India in December last year during which India announced a USD 1.4 billion financial assistance to the island nation.
- The two countries had also agreed to remain mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for the stability of the Indian Ocean region and not allow their respective territories to be used for any activity inimical to their interests.
- EAM reiterated India's commitment to supporting the country in its path of peace, development, prosperity and democracy.
- She unveiled a plaque dedicating the renovated IGM Hospital to the people of Maldives in the city of Male. IGMH is the first and largest government healthcare facility in the Maldives, built with Indian

assistance.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Maldives in November only to attend Solih's swearing-in ceremony and no substantive discussion had taken place then.

Restoring Relations:

- Relations between India and the Maldives deteriorated after the then President Abdulla Yameen imposed emergency on February 5 last year.
 - India had criticised his decision and asked his government to restore the credibility of the electoral and political process by releasing political prisoners. The emergency lasted for 45 days.
 - Solih became president in November after he defeated Yameen in presidential elections.
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