Editorial of the Day – 06.10.2025

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1. Disaster Management

India is moving beyond reactive relief efforts to a proactive, multi-layered strategy that integrates prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and recovery, reflecting a growing recognition of the complex risks posed by climate change, urbanization, and natural hazards.

India's Disaster Preparedness

India's approach to disaster preparedness has evolved into a robust, multi-tiered framework led by the Union Home Ministry (MHA), with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) at its core. India's strategy emphasizes prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response—ensuring that resilience is not just reactive but deeply embedded in national development, anchored in the Disaster Management Act of 2005.

NDMA and the Disaster Management Act, 2005

The NDMA, established under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, operates through five key divisions - Policy & Plans, Mitigation, Operations & Communications, Information & Technology, and Finance & Administration.

Its vision is to build a safer and disaster-resilient India through -

1. A technology-driven, multi-hazard, and multi-sectoral strategy;
2. Empowerment of stakeholders at all levels—central, state, district, and community;
3. Integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) into development planning;

Shift in Policy - From Relief to Resilience

Financial Architecture for Resilience - The 15th Finance Commission's allocation of ₹2.28 lakh crore ($30 billion) over five years marks a pivotal moment in aligning public finance with DRR. Rather than focusing solely on post-disaster relief, the Finance Commission divided funding across -

1. Preparedness and Capacity Building (10%);
2. Mitigation (20%);
3. Response (40%);
4. Reconstruction (30%);

It ensures that resilience is embedded into every stage of disaster management—from early warning systems to rebuilding efforts.

Building the Budget-to-Project Pipeline - The Commission identified five priority areas to ensure efficiency and accountability in DRR financing -

1. Prioritising multi-hazard challenges across India's diverse regions.
2. Integrating scientific mitigation concepts into fiscal planning.
3. Avoiding duplication with existing central or state schemes.
4. Strengthening inter-ministerial and Centre-State coordination.
5. Establishing light-touch regulatory mechanisms for timely project implementation.

By 2025, inter-ministerial and Centre-State appraisal committees were operational for all region- or hazard-specific projects, ensuring a transparent and science-driven approach.

Progress in Reconstruction and Mitigation

Reconstruction Initiatives - Over the past two years, the MHA approved ₹5,000 crore in reconstruction packages for Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, and Kerala. These projects focus on rebuilding climate-resilient infrastructure and assessing damages caused by extreme precipitation events.

Nature-Based Mitigation Programmes - Under the 20% mitigation fund, projects worth ₹10,000 crore ($1.2 billion) have been approved to promote nature-based and sustainable solutions. These efforts built upon the National Cyclone Mitigation Programme (2011–22), which successfully reduced coastal vulnerability through cyclone shelters, embankments, and early warning systems.

Initiatives include -

1. Revitalising water bodies and green spaces to mitigate urban flooding.
2. Monitoring glacial lakes using remote sensing and automated weather stations.
3. Applying bioengineering techniques for slope stabilization in landslide-prone areas.
4. Rejuvenating beels (wetlands) along the Brahmaputra River.
5. Preventing forest fires through fuel evacuation and water body restoration.

Strengthening Preparedness and Capacity Building

Institutional and Community Training - Preparedness and capacity-building funds (₹5,000 crore) have focused on -

1. Modernising fire safety infrastructure.
2. Training 2.5 lakh volunteers under the Apda Mitra and Yuva Apda Mitra programmes.
3. Expanding research and training through the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM).

NIDM now offers a standardized curriculum across 36 streams of disaster management, with the goal of mainstreaming DRR education down to the panchayat level.

Expanding the Knowledge Network - The 327-member university network, along with the NDRF Academy and National Fire Service College, plays a crucial role in training public servants, conducting mock exercises, and promoting hazard-specific awareness and school safety programmes.

Coastal Resilience and Vulnerable Communities -
At the ICDRI 2025 summit, India spotlighted the vulnerability of coastal regions and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). With nearly 90% of global trade moving by sea and coastal GDP projected to double by 2030, the stakes are high. India is supporting SIDS with resilient infrastructure, early warning systems, and water security measures, while advocating for a global digital repository of best practices.

Enhancing Early Warning and Communication Systems -
Technological innovation has dramatically improved India's early warning capabilities, reducing casualties and improving community preparedness. The multi-media Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) delivers timely alerts in regional languages, ensuring last-mile communication even in remote areas.

International Cooperation and Global Leadership -
India's commitment to the UN's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is evident in its international advocacy. Leadership in G-20, SCO, BIMSTEC, and IORA initiatives. During the G-20 presidency, India spearheaded the creation of the first Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group, focusing on -

1. Early warning systems;
2. Disaster-resilient infrastructure;
3. Financing for DRR;
4. Resilient recovery;
5. Nature-based solutions;

These platforms help India exchange best practices and develop global frameworks for climate resilience and sustainable risk management.

Conclusion

India's approach to disaster risk reduction represents a paradigm shift — from reactive disaster response to proactive resilience-building. Through robust financial planning, scientific integration, and international cooperation, India is constructing a future-ready DRR ecosystem. By emphasizing community participation, nature-based solutions, and technological innovation, the nation is progressively de-risking its complex hazard landscape and positioning itself as a global leader in climate resilience.

Source - https - //www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-direction-for-disaster-resilience/article70128332.ece

2. Issues Related To Health

Topic - GS2/Governance

Recent tragic incidents involving contaminated cough syrup and the resulting deaths of several children have placed India's reputation as the 'pharmacy to the world' under scrutiny.

About India's Pharmaceutical Industry

India's pharmaceutical industry stands as a global powerhouse — renowned for its scale, affordability, and innovation. India supplies affordable medicines to over 200 countries and contributes significantly to domestic and international public health. India's pharmaceutical exports are vital to low- and middle-income countries.

Scale and Reach

According to the Department of Pharmaceuticals, India ranks - 3rd globally by volume of pharmaceutical production; 14th by value, reflecting its cost-efficiency and mass-scale manufacturing; As of FY 2023–24 - The industry is valued at USD 50 billion; Domestic consumption accounts for USD 23.5 billion; Exports contribute USD 26.5 billion, with major markets including the U.S., Europe, and Africa;

Future Projection - Industry growth to USD 130 billion by 2030; A potential USD 450 billion valuation by 2047, aligning with India's centennial independence goals;

Global Leadership - India supplies -

1. Over 50% of global vaccine demand;
2. Around 40% of U.S. generic drug consumption;
3. A significant share of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and biosimilars;

Key Issues & Challenges Around India's Pharma Industry

Issues of Safety - It includes the contamination of cough syrups with toxic industrial solvents to the seizure of counterfeit cancer drugs in Telangana.In one incident, diethylene glycol (DEG) and ethylene glycol (EG) — toxic industrial chemicals used in paints and brake fluids — were found in pediatric medicine, leading to the deaths of several children. These incidents are not isolated; they point to systemic failures in oversight, quality control, and enforcement.

Recurrent and Preventable Crisis - Similar incidents in The Gambia (2022) and Uzbekistan (2022), which killed nearly 90 children combined, were traced back to Indian-made cough syrups. Investigations by the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed 'unacceptable levels' of these toxins. India introduced mandatory pre-export testing for cough syrups in 2023 — but only for export-bound batches, which left domestic products largely unchecked.

Fragmented Oversight and Weak Enforcement - India's drug regulation is governed by the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940, with responsibilities split between centre and state-level authorities. This dual structure has led to -

1. Jurisdictional confusion, with unclear accountability.
2. Inconsistent inspections and licensing standards across states.
3. Reactive governance, where enforcement follows public outcry rather than proactive monitoring.

Threat to India's Pharmaceutical Credibility - India supplies about 40% of generic medicines in the US; 25% in the UK; and 90% in Africa. The combination of lax oversight, fake drug markets, and profit-driven shortcuts risks undermining India's hard-won global standing in pharmaceuticals.

Regulatory Framework in India

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) - It is a national regulatory authority responsible for drug approvals, clinical trials, import control, and coordination with state regulators under the MoH&FW. It oversees compliance with the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945.

State Drug Control Authorities - Handle licensing, inspections, and enforcement at the state level; Work in tandem with CDSCO to ensure uniform implementation of drug laws;

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) - Regulates prices of essential medicines under the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO); Ensures affordability and accessibility of key drugs

Legal Framework

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 - Governs manufacture, sale, and distribution of drugs and cosmetics; Includes provisions for Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Laboratory Practices (GLP);

New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 - Streamlines clinical trial approvals and compensation mechanisms; Introduces timelines for regulatory decisions and waivers for certain drug categories

Schedule M & Schedule Y -

Schedule M - Standards for manufacturing practices;

Schedule Y - Guidelines for clinical trial conduct and ethics;

Reforms and Policy Initiatives

National Pharmaceutical Policy (Draft 2023) - It focuses on regulatory efficiency, innovation, and global competitiveness; Emphasizes self-reliance in Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and biosimilars;

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme - It encourages domestic manufacturing of critical drugs and raw materials

Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (PTUAS) - It supports SMEs in upgrading to WHO-GMP standards

Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech (PRIP) - It aims to build a robust R&D ecosystem.

Innovation & R&D - Establishment of National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs); Launch of the National Policy on R&D and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech (2023);

Global Alignment - India is increasingly aligning its regulatory practices with international standards -

1. Collaboration with WHO, US FDA, and EMA;
2. Adoption of ICH guidelines for drug development and safety;
3. Participation in global pharmacovigilance networks;

Way Forward

Rebuilding trust requires more than punitive action after each tragedy. India needs to -

1. Enforce uniform quality standards for both domestic and export markets.
2. Empower and reform the CDSCO to function independently of political and industrial pressures.
3. Mandate transparency in drug testing and recall data.
4. Establish accountability chains linking manufacturers, distributors, and regulators.

India's claim to being the world's reliable medicine supplier will continue to ring hollow, without such reforms.

Source - https - //www.newindianexpress.com/editorials/2025/Oct/08/punish-the-guilty-in-lethal-drug-case-fix-the-system