



# India First Responder In Indian Ocean Region

## Why in News

Recently, the **Defence Minister of India** addressed the **5<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Disaster Management (WCDM)** held in New Delhi.

- At the congress the Defence Minister asserted that, time and again India has proved itself to be “**first responder**” in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- The emerging concept of India as a “first responder” reflects the **country’s growing capability and increasing willingness to assume the role of a leading power**.

## World Congress on Disaster Management

- It is a unique **initiative of Disaster management initiatives and convergence society** to bring researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the world in the same platform to discuss various challenging issues of disaster risk management.
- Its mission is **to promote interaction of science, policy and practices to enhance understanding of risks and advance actions** for reducing risks and building resilience to disasters.

## Key Points

- **India - The First Responder:**
  - **Underlying Vision:** India’s vision for the Indian Ocean encapsulated by the concept of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**. SAGAR has both distinct and inter-related elements such as:
    - Deepening **economic and security cooperation** among the littoral states.
    - **Enhancing capacities** to safeguard land and maritime territories.
    - Working towards **sustainable regional development**.
    - **Blue Economy** and promoting collective action to deal with non-traditional threats like natural disasters, piracy and terrorism.
  - **Enabling Factors:** India’s unique position in the **Indian Ocean Region**, complemented by a capability of the Armed Forces, enables it to contribute significantly in **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** situations.
    - By contributing its resources to prevent or mitigate regional and international crises, **India is demonstrating its commitment as a responsible actor in the international order**.
  - **Need: Challenging geo-political landscape** and the traditional and non-traditional threats including natural calamities like **Covid-19** faced by the world.
    - Whether it is a **natural catastrophe, or a sudden financial shock**, the repercussions are often massive, with regional and global implications.
    - By taking the lead, India tries providing a public good to the **international order**, supporting smaller or less capable states in dire need of assistance.
- **Manifestation of India As First Responder:**

- **HADR Operations:** India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR co-operation and coordination with its **neighbours and friendly countries** with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities.
  - The Indian government and military forces have played a critical role in supporting neighbouring countries in relief operations like the [2004 tsunami](#), [2015 Nepal Earthquake](#), etc.
- **Building Disaster Resilience:** India taking lead and offering expertise of **Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** (DRI) to its friendly countries .
  - [Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure](#) (CDRI) was first proposed by India during the 2016 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in New Delhi.
- **Expatriate Evacuation Operations: Operation Rahat** in Yemen in 2015 when India rescued and evacuated over 6,700 persons, including over 1,940 citizens of more than 40 other countries.
- **Non-Traditional Security Challenges:**The Indian Navy has emerged as the Indian Ocean's default first responder to non-traditional security challenges.
  - To [combat piracy](#) in the **Gulf of Aden since 2008**, it deployed almost thirty warships that have escorted more than 1500 ships and thwarted around thirty piracy attempts.
- **Post-Conflict Relief And Rehabilitation:** India has often taken the lead in supporting countries going through post-conflict processes which require expert resources and significant funding.
  - **For Example**, India provided help to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka for post conflict recovery.
- **Refugee Flows:** Whenever people fear for their lives in South Asia, they often look up to India first. **India has consistently provided an emergency safe haven for refugee and minority populations from across South Asia.**

## Way Forward

- **Leveraging Cutting-Edge Technologies:** Emerging [cutting-edge technologies](#) in the fields of space, communication, bio-engineering, bio-medics and [artificial intelligence](#) can revolutionise the way the risks of disasters are assessed and communicated through early warning.
- **Post Pandemic Assessment:** A comprehensive assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of [2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#) is needed.
  - The new framework should emphasise on the need to incorporate new ideas in global and national strategies for the implementation of the goals.
- **Studying And Augmenting First Respondent Tradition:** The first respondent tradition must be further studied and promoted, because it reflects India's deep commitment to assume a driving role in the international order.
  - And it will also have to be endowed with adequate resources and capabilities for India to move even quicker and farther beyond its borders.

[Source: TH](#)