

New policy to help Indian communities displaced by annual river & coastal erosion

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In news– The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) received the final inputs recently from disaster management officials and researchers on the draft of India's first national policy for the mitigation and rehabilitation of the people affected by river and coastal erosion.

Key highlights of the new policy-

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs had directed NDMA to draft a policy based on the 15th Finance Commission's report for 2021.
- **Until now, most policies in the country only address displacement after sudden rapid-onset disasters such as floods and cyclones.**
- **The 15th Finance Commission's report considers two aspects related to the new policy.**
 1. **First, it introduces mitigation measures to prevent erosion** under the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF), with an allocation of Rs 1,500 crore for 2021-26.
 2. Second, for the **resettlement of displaced people affected by erosion**, it allocates R 1,000 crore for the same period under the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).
- This is being taken out of the recovery and reconstruction window introduced for the first time under NDRF in 2021.
- **For both funds, state governments will have to avail**

resources on a cost-sharing basis, contributing 25 per cent to the costs of mitigation and resettlement associated with coastal and river erosion; however, northeastern states have to only pool 10 percent of state funds.

- NDMA will coordinate the allocations and expenses under NDRF and NDMF at the national level for mitigation and rehabilitation.
- The commission's report emphasised that **states must follow timelines for mitigation and rehabilitation projects without delays.**
- The draft policy said that **projects under NDRF and NDMF should be sanctioned in such a manner that they can be completed within the award period of the Commission."**
- NDMA's draft policy stated that **district disaster management authorities would be the nodal agency to implement the measures**, aided by other district agencies and a specific panchayat-level committee.
- It put in place some institutional mechanisms to manage displacement due to coastal and river erosion, which can be enacted under the Disaster Management Act of 2005.
- **The DDMA will prepare mitigation and rehabilitation plans and submit them to the SDMAs**, from where the proposed measures will be appraised by NDMA and finally submitted to the home ministry.
- A high-level committee of the ministry will then approve the disbursement of funds.
- After plans are approved and implementation begins, DDMA's will also be responsible for organising, monitoring and evaluation of the efforts under the supervision of their state and national counterparts.
- The new draft policy insists on mapping coastal and river erosion impacts and coming up with a database of diverse challenges confronted by the affected and vulnerable habitations.
- It noted that mapping of fallow areas must be taken up for rehabilitation with discussions with the affected

and vulnerable communities for their acceptability.

- The draft policy also recommends impact and vulnerability assessments of regions threatened by coastal and river erosion to be undertaken periodically, which will be spearheaded by SDMAs in coordination with the state departments and DDMAs.