

Editorial of the Day – 05.11.2025

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1. Lives saved, livelihoods lost–(TH)

General Studies 3 – Disaster Management

Topic – Challenges in post-disaster livelihood recovery, financing disaster resilience, nature-based solutions (mangroves), and case studies (Odisha Model).

Introduction – The Next Phase of Resilience

Building long-term resilience in Odisha requires a critical strategic shift – moving beyond an efficient disaster response system (which successfully saves lives) to a robust livelihood renewal system. While Odisha's life-saving mechanisms are exemplary, economic recovery remains uneven, particularly for farmers, fishers, and smallholders. The new goal must be to empower these communities through rapid insurance, accessible credit, and "green protection"—linking financial resilience with ecological stability to ensure communities can thrive, not just survive, in the shadow of recurring cyclones.

A. Cyclone Montha – The Latest Test

Landfall and Path – Cyclone Montha made landfall on the eastern coast on October 28, 2025. It hit between Machilipatnam and Kalingapatnam (near Kakinada) in Andhra Pradesh.

Intensity and Impact – With wind speeds of 100–110 kmph, the storm moved inland, cutting through southern Odisha (Ganjam, Rayagada, Koraput) and parts of Telangana before it weakened into a depression.

Immediate Damage – The cyclone flattened agricultural fields, flooded villages, and displaced thousands, who were moved to cyclone shelters. The agriculture and horticulture sectors suffered major losses across this belt.

B. The Structural Vulnerability of Odisha

Geographic Prone-ness – Odisha's 575-km coastline is located in one of the six most cyclone-prone zones in the world.

A History of Disasters – The state's exposure is chronic, not accidental. In the past century, nearly 260 cyclones have hit Odisha.

Key Examples – This includes the catastrophic 1999 super-cyclone (which caused massive loss of life) and Phailin (2013), which alone led to ₹9,000 crore in damages, with over one-fourth of that impacting agriculture and livestock. Other recent storms include Titli (2018), Fani (2019), and Yaas (2021).

C. The Economic and Livelihood Fallout

Immediate Shocks – The immediate economic impact includes the loss for farmers, severe cash-flow crises for traders, and food supply disruptions in urban areas.

Quantifying the Loss (Cyclone Fani) – A UNDP-led study after Cyclone Fani provided a clear picture of the damage –

1. ₹3,000 crore damage to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries.
2. Seven crore lost rural working days, equating to nearly ₹2,700 crore in lost wages.

The Long-Term Distress Cycle – A long-term crisis follows as farmers must repay existing loans and secure new inputs for the next season. Fishers must replace damaged boats and gear, often before insurance payments arrive.

Systemic Diversion – Informal enterprises remain shut for months, credit tightens, and crucial public funds are diverted from development sectors like health, education, and infrastructure to fund immediate reconstruction.

D. The Gap – Disaster Management Success vs. Livelihood Failure

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The Success (Saving Lives) – The Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has perfected its response, utilizing improved cyclone shelters, precise early warnings, and efficient mass evacuations.

The Proof – The reduction in human casualties is drastic and commendable –

1. **1999 Super-cyclone** – ~10,000 deaths
2. **Phailin (2013)** – < 50 deaths
3. **Yaas (2021)** – 2 deaths

The Gap (Saving Livelihoods) – Despite this success, livelihood recovery consistently lags behind. Reconstruction efforts focus primarily on physical infrastructure (roads, housing, power). Economic rehabilitation remains a secondary priority.

Ecological Stressors – This economic vulnerability is worsened by ecological degradation, such as saltwater intrusion and storm surges, which degrade soils and force farmers toward low-yield crops or migration.

E. Building True, Long-term Resilience

Matching Policy Goals – The efficiency of livelihood recovery must be brought up to the same level as the life-saving response.

1. Financial Resilience –

Insurance – Simplify and speed up crop and fishery insurance claims.

Credit – Provide emergency credit and short-term loan moratoria to prevent distress sales of assets.

MGNREGS – Expand the scope of MGNREGS for rebuilding embankments, ponds, and other rural assets.

2. Nature-Based Solutions (Ecological Resilience) –

The "Green Shield" – Nature-based solutions are critical. Mangroves and wetlands act as natural barriers, reducing wave energy by up to 90%, thereby protecting coasts while simultaneously sustaining livelihoods (e.g., fisheries).

Integrated Models – Odisha is already pioneering climate-smart aquaculture (like mud-crab farming) and rice intensification (SMI), which combine ecology with economic returns.

3. Structural Financial Reforms – This requires high-level reforms, including dedicated contingency funds, regional insurance pools, and robust systems for direct transfers to smallholders and coastal communities.

F. Conclusion

Sustainable resilience is not built merely in cyclone shelters; it is built in restored farms, revived fisheries, and rejuvenated ecosystems. By integrating ecology (nature-based defenses), economy (swift financial support), and equity (inclusive development), Odisha can secure both its livelihoods and its landscapes. This integrated approach transforms the cycle of recurring disasters into a genuine opportunity for climate adaptation.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/lives-saved-livelihoods-lost/article70239743.ece>

2. Why Bill Gates' changed climate views are in step with India's

General Studies 3 – Environment

Topic – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Introduction – A New Focus in Climate Discourse

The global conversation on climate change has historically been dominated by mitigation—the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, Bill Gates has emerged as an influential voice seeking to reshape this discourse. He is forcefully emphasizing climate adaptation, technological innovation, and practical strategies that address the immediate vulnerabilities of developing countries, thereby shifting the focus from an abstract future goal to a present-day reality.

A. The Shift from Mitigation to Adaptation

Traditional Discourse (Mitigation-Centric) – The established climate discourse, led by international organizations and multilateral agreements like the Paris Accord, has primarily focused on mitigation. This

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involves cutting emissions through renewable energy adoption, carbon pricing, and large-scale industrial transitions.

Limitations of Mitigation-Only - While essential, these measures are often long-term and capital-intensive. This poses significant difficulties for low-income nations that are still grappling with basic developmental challenges and lack the resources for such a rapid, costly transition.

Gates' Argument (Adaptation as a Priority) - Through interventions like the "Gates Memo," Gates argues that focusing solely on mitigation overlooks the immediate threats of climate change that are already devastating lives. These include -

1. Floods and droughts
2. Rising temperatures
3. Declining agricultural productivity

Adaptation as an Equal Imperative - He advocates that adaptation—building resilience through better infrastructure, drought-resistant crops, and healthcare preparedness—must receive equal, if not greater, attention and funding.

Alignment with Developing Nations - This position strongly aligns with the needs of developing nations, which bear the brunt of climate impacts despite having contributed minimally to historical global emissions.

B. Innovation as the Cornerstone of Climate Action

Technology as the Key Enabler - Gates emphasizes technological innovation as the cornerstone of any effective climate action. He argues that breakthroughs are essential to make climate solutions both scalable and affordable for the entire world, not just wealthy nations.

Investment via Breakthrough Energy - Through his organization, Breakthrough Energy, he has invested heavily in climate tech startups that focus on "hard-to-solve" areas, including -

1. Carbon capture
2. Advanced nuclear energy
3. Green hydrogen
4. Sustainable agriculture

A Market-Compatible Pathway - Gates' approach seeks to bridge the gap between scientific innovation and practical implementation. He contends that climate change cannot be solved by moral persuasion alone; it requires a market-compatible, innovation-driven pathway that can attract sustained private investment.

Empowering Developing Economies - He underscores that innovation should not be confined to rich nations. Developing economies must be empowered to "leapfrog" to cleaner technologies, allowing them to industrialize without following the carbon-intensive pathways that the West did.

C. The China Factor and Global Climate Politics

China's Pivotal Role - Gates brings a pragmatic lens to the geopolitical aspect of climate change, specifically highlighting China's pivotal role.

A Nation of Contrasts - China is simultaneously the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases and the world's largest investor in renewable energy.

Advocacy for Pragmatic Collaboration - He argues that constructive engagement with China is essential for any realistic global progress. Rather than isolating China, he advocates for pragmatic collaboration focused on shared technological advancement.

A Bridge Over Polarized Politics - This stance contrasts with the increasingly polarized global politics, where Western nations often frame China and India as "laggards." Gates' position seeks to build a bridge of shared responsibility, recognizing that climate change is a collective challenge that transcends geopolitical rivalries.

D. Equity, Realism, and Pragmatism in Action

A Central Theme of Realism - A central theme of Gates' intervention is realism. He acknowledges that a zero-emission world is a long-term aspiration that will take decades to achieve.

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Adaptation as a Moral Imperative - Given this timeline, he argues that policies must be designed not only to reduce emissions but also to minimize human suffering in the interim. Therefore, adaptation becomes a moral imperative to save lives now.

Focus on Equity - This approach inherently focuses on equity, demanding that poorer nations receive adequate financial and technological support (i.e., climate finance) to help them deal with a crisis they did little to create.

E. Way Forward - Bridging Aspiration and Action

A Pragmatic Shift - Bill Gates' perspective represents a pragmatic and necessary shift in the global climate discourse. It complements the moral urgency of mitigation with the practical necessity of adaptation.

Beyond Ideological Divides - His emphasis on innovation, equity, and realistic timelines injects fresh energy into a debate that is often mired in ideological divides and political posturing.

From Aspiration to Action - By focusing on solutions that (innovation), Gates effectively bridges the critical gap between aspiration and action. save lives today (adaptation) while investing in technologies for tomorrow

Source - <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/why-bill-gates-changed-climate-views-are-in-step-with-indias-10346527/lite/>

