



News Analysis (10 Apr, 2020)

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Rs. 15000 Crore Sanctioned to States

Why in News

Recently, the Central Government has sanctioned **₹15,000 crore** to States under the **India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package**.

Key Points

- The package is a **100% centrally-funded scheme** and the funds will be provided under a **mission mode approach**.
- Amount of ₹7774 crore will be utilised for immediate Covid-19 Emergency Response and rest will be used for medium-term support (1-4 years).
 - The amount of ₹4113 crore has already been disbursed to all the States and Union Territories (UTs) dealing with the emergency response to the pandemic.
- **Objective:**
 - Mounting emergency response through development of diagnostics and dedicated treatment facilities.
 - Strengthening pandemic research, community engagement, risk communication and implementation
 - Management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation.
- As per the evolving conditions, the government is **authorised to re-appropriate resources** among various components of the package and among various implementation agencies like the **National Health Mission**, Central Procurement, Railways, Department of Health Research/**Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)**, **National Centre for Disease Control**.

- The **States can use the funds for:**
 - Centralised procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients (Personal Protective Equipment, isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators, etc.)
 - Strengthen and build health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks.
 - Setting up of laboratories and bolstering surveillance activities, biosecurity preparedness, pandemic research and proactively engage communities.
 - Conducting risk communication activities.

Reasons for Strained State Finances

- **Fall in the revenues** due to the **lockdown** and **higher spending** due to the **coping measures against novel coronavirus** pandemic.
 - There are no buyers for state bonds, and goods and services tax collections are down, revenues from fuel, liquor, stamp duty and registration charges are also down.
 - At the same time, the states are incurring bulk of the on-the-ground expenditures on containing Covid-19.
- **States** are currently **mandated** to keep their **fiscal deficits within 3% of Gross Domestic Product** (GDP).

A one percentage point relaxation will give them latitude to borrow an extra ₹200,000 crore or so, but this will not really work in a “broken” bond market as investors demand higher interest rates.
- Simply put, the borrowing costs for states have gone up by almost one percentage point in less than a month’s time.
- Few states wanted to borrow around ₹37,500 crore through sale of bonds, with tenures ranging from two to 15 years, conducted on the **Reserve Bank of India’s** (RBI) auction platform.

However, they were able to mobilise only ₹32,560 crore.
- Since 1st April, the central bank has increased the **existing ways and means advances limits** (for states to borrow at the **repo rate**) by 30%, apart from allowing them to be in overdraft for 21 continuous working days, from the earlier 14 days.

Source:TH

Kerala Gets Nod for Trial of Plasma Therapy

Why in News

Recently, **Kerala** has got the **Indian Council of Medical Research** (ICMR) approval for the clinical protocol exploring the feasibility of **convalescent plasma transfusion** which may be administered to severe **Covid-19** patients.

Key Points

- A proposal was submitted to ICMR saying that the **Transfusion Medicine Department of the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Kerala** would help the Health Department in exploring the possibility of Convalescent Plasma (CP) therapy for Covid-19 treatment.
- The move was taken as a **precautionary step** to be prepared for the more severe second and third waves of the **novel coronavirus** pandemic.
- Kerala had also sought ICMR's early clearance for **using HIV antivirals (lopinavir/ritonavir)** for treating Covid-19 after reports on their potential use surfaced.
- Kerala might need to **submit an expanded access protocol to ICMR** and **Drugs Controller General's approval** and **Institutional Ethics Committee approval** would be necessary before the administration of the treatment.
- One **major challenge** is the **non-availability of the kit for checking the antibody level in the plasma of a recovered person.**
 - It is not available in India and has to be **brought from Germany.**
 - The **cancellation of international flights** would lead to **delay** in importing the desired number of kits.

Convalescent Plasma Therapy

- Convalescent plasma (CP) therapy is not a new therapy and banks on the age-old concept of **passive immunity.**
- **Basis of the Therapy:**
 - The convalescent plasma therapy seeks to make **use of the antibodies developed in the recovered patient** against the coronavirus.
 - The **whole blood or plasma** from such people is taken, and the plasma is then injected in critically ill patients so that the **antibodies are transferred** and boost their fight against the virus.
- **Time Period for Infusion:**
 - A study in The Lancet Infectious Diseases stated that a Covid patient usually **develops primary immunity against the virus in 10-14 days.**
 - Therefore, if the plasma is **injected at an early stage,** it can possibly help fight the virus and prevent severe illness.

- **Infusion into Covid-19 Patients:**
 - The plasma can be **infused into two kinds of Covid-19 patients**, those with a **severe illness** or individuals at a **higher risk of getting the virus**.
 - However, while plasma transfers immunity from one person to another, it is **not known if it can save lives** in Covid-19 infection.
 - The treatment could be **effective for patients in the age group 40-60**, but **may be less effective for people aged beyond 60 years**.
- **Previous Application:**
 - The **United States** used plasma of recovered patients to treat patients of **Spanish flu** (1918-1920).
 - Hong Kong used it to treat **SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)** patients in 2005.
 - In 2009, the **Swine flu (H1N1)** patients were treated with plasma.
 - It has also been used to treat critically ill patients during **Ebola** as well.
- The report of a study, **Proceedings of National Academies of Sciences (U.S.)**, highlighted that CP therapy shows a potential therapeutic effect and low risk in the treatment of severe Covid-19 patients.
- According to the study, **one dose (200 ml) of convalescent plasma with a high concentration of neutralising antibodies** is **well-tolerated** by patients and it can **rapidly reduce the viral load in patients** and **improve clinical symptoms** significantly.

Source: TH

Measures for Farmers' Welfare

Why in News

The Government has taken up measures to protect farmers facing obstacles during the **lockdown** due to **Covid-19**.

Measures for Fruit and Vegetable Farmers

- Fruit and Vegetable Farmers have been **among the hardest hit by the lockdown**. They are facing major losses due to **obstacles in harvesting and marketing their perishable produce**.
- The Central Government has directed all the States and Union Territories to implement the **Market Intervention Scheme** to ensure remunerative prices to farmers for perishable crops.

- It has also begun a **train service to transport perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities** to markets due to the obstacles in road transport.
According to the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare **50 trains have been deployed for this purpose.**

Market Intervention Scheme

- Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) is implemented by the **Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.**
- The objective of MIS is to provide **remunerative prices to the farmers in case of excess of production and fall in prices.**
- The MIS is an ad-hoc scheme under which include **horticultural commodities and other agricultural commodities.**
These commodities are perishable in nature and which are **not covered under the minimum price support scheme.**
- Further, the MIS is implemented on the specific requests of the **State Government/UT Administrations willing to share the loss with the Central Government on a 50:50 basis** (75:25 in case of North-Eastern States).

Measures for Pulses and Oilseeds Farmers

- Farmers, mostly in dry-land areas, have been complaining that **market prices** for toor and urad dal, chickpeas and soybean are **far below the Minimum Support Prices (MSP)** in many mandis, with trading disrupted by the lockdown.
 - The **MSP** is the **rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.**
 - It is fixed on the recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).**
- The Centre has extended the procurement window for its **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** up to 90 days from the date of commencement of the scheme in each State.
- The **PSS** is operationalised on the State governments' request when the prices fall **below the minimum support price (MSP).**
- The **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED)** and other agencies procure pulses and oilseeds under the scheme at the MSP.

The procurement of pulses will also aid in the implementation of the Centre's promise to provide one kg of pulses per month to all families with ration cards for the three months as part of a **Covid-19 relief package (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana).**

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd

- NAFED is registered under the **Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.**

- It was set up in 1958 with the objective **to promote Cooperative marketing of Agricultural Produce to benefit the farmers.**
- **Agricultural farmers are the members** of the General Body of NAFED, who participate in the decision making process of NAFED.

Source: TH

Alternative Market Channel for Farmers

Why in News

In Maharashtra, an alternative market channel aids the impact on production and distribution of agricultural commodities as a result of the lockdown.

- It is a nearly two-decade-old initiative to reach fresh produce directly to consumers in Maharashtra, bypassing the mandis.
- **Mandi System:**
 - The mandi is a marketplace where farmers sell their produce to the licensed buyers through auction.
 - It is operated as per the regulations of **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC).**
 - The auction is facilitated by the adithis (commission agents, middlemen) at the mandi, who hold licenses and are allotted a shop in the market.
 - These are wholesale markets - sites of aggregation and assembly, dealing with the bulk purchases and trade of agricultural commodities, before goods are processed in different units and distributed through a range of retail channels.

Key Points

- The model was introduced in the **early 2000s.**
- The idea was to create smaller, less congested markets in urban areas with the participation of farmers' groups and **Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs)**, so that growers of vegetables and fruit have direct access to consumers.

- The model is implemented by the **state Agriculture Department and Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board (MSAMB)**. Maharashtra is one of a handful of states where FPCs are robust.
 - At least 118 such markets were set up in Mumbai, Pune and Thane, with more planned in Nashik, Aurangabad and other cities before the lockdown began on March 24, 2020.
 - The farmers' groups have filled much of the gap created by the shuttering of wholesale markets. More than 200 FPCs are now supplying fresh vegetables in urban Maharashtra.
- **Working**
 - The government and MSAMB **identify farmer groups and FPCs, and form clusters.**
 - The FPCs and farmers' groups are **allotted space for weekly markets** in municipal wards or localities.
 - The local bodies choose the market sites and link the markets for **direct delivery to cooperative housing societies.**
 - Some producers' groups **even park pick-up trucks** loaded with fruits and vegetables at the gates of housing societies.
- **Advantages during lockdown when social distancing is critical:**
 - **Traffic of both buyers and sellers in these decentralised markets can be controlled more effectively** than in wholesale mandis.
 - In several areas of Pune and Mumbai, the decentralised markets have given way **to FPCs delivering directly** to the gates of housing societies.
 - Most FPCs have minimised contact, and have taken to selling **pre-packed, customised packets of vegetables.**
- **Benefits to Farmers**
 - The start of the **Covid-19** coincided with the **peak vegetable harvesting season.**
 - As the markets were locked down, there was a threat to the crop in over **100 lakh hectares in the country.**
 - A significant part of the produce of the state has made its way to these markets, lessening the impact on farmers.
 - More importantly, larger numbers of vegetable growers in Maharashtra have got into **direct selling to consumers.**
 - The practices of **rudimentary packing, sorting and branding** are being inculcated in farmers, as they pack and send pre-ordered packets to housing societies.
 - This model will likely help **create alternative market chains** that could continue even after lockdown.

Farmer Producer Companies

- A provision for setting up FPCs was made in the **Companies Act, 1956 in 2003 by an amendment to the Act.**
- According to the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**, a producer company is a hybrid between a **private limited company and a cooperative society.**

Therefore, it enjoys the benefits of professional management of a private limited company as well as mutual benefits derived from a cooperative society.
- Most of these FPCs are **concentrated in a few states** such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Bihar.
 - Some have been formed by landless **women, labourers or marginal farmers.**
 - A significant proportion of FPCs has been engaged in **sale of agricultural inputs such as seeds and pesticides to farmers** while some of them are involved in commercial seed production.
 - However, only a handful of FPCs have been able to become **financially viable.**

Source: IE

Monetary Policy Report

Why in News

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released its **Monetary Policy Report (MPR).**
- The report follows the unscheduled **monetary policy** meeting held in end March, 2020 to discuss the uncertainties arising from the nationwide lockdown.

Since the review was conducted in end March, 2020, the early policy review, scheduled for April, 2020 was withdrawn.

Key Points

- **Inflation**
 - The **consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation**, had stayed elevated in the last few months. It is expected to **decrease during the course of the financial year.**
 - **CPI inflation** is tentatively projected to ease from 4.8% in (Quarter)Q1 of 2020-21 to 4.4% in Q2, 2.7% in Q3 and 2.4% in Q4.

This may be due to the prevailing high uncertainty.

 - Aggregate demand may weaken further than currently anticipated and ease core inflation further.
 - Supply bottlenecks could increase pressures more than expected.
 - Estimates indicate that inflation could move in a **range of 3.6-3.8% assuming a normal monsoon and no major exogenous or policy shocks.**

- The RBI monetary policy:
 - The **Repo Rate** was reduced by 75 basis points (bps) to 4.4%
 - The **Cash Reserve Ratio** was reduced by 100 bps to 3%.
- However, the RBI refrained from making any prediction on growth. Forecasts for real **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth** in India were not provided due to prevailing uncertainties due to **Covid-19**.
- Improvements in inflation and growth are expected to emanate from monetary, fiscal and other policy measures and the early containment of Covid-19. However, there are uncertainties with these factors.
- **Oil Price Drop**
 - The sharp reduction in **international crude oil prices**, if sustained, could improve the country's terms of trade.
 - However, the gain from this channel is **not expected to offset the impact of shutdown and loss of external demand**.
- **Exchange Rates**
 - The global financial market volatility caused by the uncertainty of macroeconomic impact of the Covid-19, as in February-March 2020, could exert pressure on the Indian rupee.
 - **Should the rupee depreciate by 5%** from the baseline, inflation could increase by around 20 bps while GDP growth could be higher by about 15 bps through increased net exports.
 - In contrast, **should Covid-19 normalise quickly**, strong capital flows could revive.
 - **An appreciation of the rupee by 5%** could moderate inflation by around 20 bps and GDP growth by around 15 bps vis-a-vis the baseline.

Monetary Policy

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uses monetary policy to control **inflation, interest rates, supply of money and credit availability**.
- The RBI has a government-constituted **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** which is tasked with framing monetary policy using tools like the **repo rate, reverse repo rate, bank rate, Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**.
- The **repo rate**, also known as the policy rate, is the interest rate at which the RBI provides loans to banks.
- The **reverse repo** is the rate at which commercial banks park their money with the central bank.
- **Bank rate** is the rate charged by the RBI for lending funds to commercial banks.
- **Cash Reserve Ratio:** Banks are required to hold a **certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash**. This **minimum ratio** (that is the part of the total deposits to be held as cash) is stipulated by the RBI and is known as the CRR.

Industrial Output Grows in February

Why in News

According to recent data released by the **National Statistical Office**, the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** accelerated at 4.5% in February in comparison to the previous year.

Key Points

- **Higher output in mining, electricity and manufacturing sectors** is the reason behind the IIP growth.
Recently, **the eight core sector industries** also recorded a growth of 5.5% in **February, 2020** which is **highest in 11-months**.
- The mining sector saw a robust 10% growth in production, while the electricity sector saw 8.1% growth and manufacturing sector output grew at a rate of 3.2%.
- However, **the auto sector, computer and electronics manufacturing** output saw **negative growth**.
- February saw the second straight month of improved industrial output after a contraction in December.
- However, the **IIP is likely to plunge again for March, due to the lockdown** caused by the **Covid-19** pandemic, which has resulted in a halt in most business.

Index of Industrial Production

- The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** is an index that **shows the growth rates in different industry groups** of the economy in a fixed period of time.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the **National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- IIP is a **composite indicator** that measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
 - **Broad sectors**, namely, Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
 - **Use-based sectors**, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.
- **Base Year** for IIP is **2011-2012**.
- The **eight core industries** of India represent **about 40% of the weight of items** that are included in the IIP.

- Significance of IIP :
 - IIP is the **only** measure on the **physical volume** of production.
 - It is **used by government agencies** including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for policy-making purposes.
 - IIP remains extremely relevant for the calculation of the quarterly and **advance GDP estimates**.

Source: TH

Webinar on Covid-19 Response by TRIFED

Why in News

Recently, the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India** (TRIFED) organized a **Webinar** in collaboration with the **United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF) and the **World Health Organisation** (WHO).

Key Points

- The webinar was organised for **Virtual training of TRIFED Trainers and Self Help Groups (SHGs)** on basic **orientation on Covid-19 response and key preventive measures** to ensure that tribal gatherers carry on their work safely.
 - To **create awareness** among the community about social distancing and steps to be followed.
 - **Do's and Don'ts Advisories** during collection of **Non Timber Forest Produce** (NTFP).
 - To **provide suggestive practices** for maintaining personal hygiene, adopting cashless practices, etc.
 - To reach more than 18,000 participants and cover tribal regions across all the 27 States.
- The collaboration helped in developing a digital communication strategy for promoting a digital campaign and highlighting the importance of Social Distancing.

- Certain **proactive measures need to be initiated** to ensure the wellbeing of the tribals and their economy by providing them safety and ensuring their livelihoods.
 - It becomes important because it is the **peak season for collection and harvest** of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and NTFP** in many regions.
 - MFP **includes all non-timber forest produce of plant origin** and includes **bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, tusser** etc.
 - It provides both **subsistence and cash income** for people who live in or near forests. They form a major portion of their food, fruits, medicines and other consumption items and also provide cash income through sales.
- **Other Measures:**
 - **UNICEF** is providing the **necessary support to the SHG Centers** in the form of Digital Multimedia content, Webinars for Virtual training, Social Media campaigns and Vanya Radio.
 - TRIFED has also reached out to the **Art of Living Foundation's #iStandWithHumanity Initiative** to include a **Stand With Tribal Families** component which will provide food and ration for survival of the tribal community.
 - Promotion of 15,000 SHGs as **Van Dhan Social Distancing Awareness cum Livelihood Centers'** through a digital training program. Over 3.6 lakh tribal gatherers will be involved in the scheme.
 - A total of 1205 **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras** (VDVKs) have been sanctioned in 27 States and 1 Union territory involving around 18,075 Van Dhan Self Help Groups.

Source: PIB

EPFO Disbursed Claims

Why in News

The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** has processed nearly **1.37 lakh claims** and **disbursed an amount of Rs 279.65 crore** **since the launch of the online facility allowing advance withdrawal on March 29, 2020.**

Key Points

- The **scheme allowing advance withdrawal from EPF accounts** was notified in the wake of the **coronavirus pandemic**.
- It **allows withdrawal not exceeding the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months** or **up to 75% of the PF balance**, whichever is less.

- The Finance Minister — as part of the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana** —had said that the government will bear the **cost of the provident fund contributions, both of the employer and employees—12% each—for the three months (April - June)** for those establishments which have up to **100 employees** and **90% of whom are earning less than ₹15,000 per month as salary.**

The government also relaxed withdrawal conditions from EPF accounts.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

- It is a **government organization** that manages **provident fund and pension accounts** for the **workforce engaged in the organized sector** in India.
- It **implements the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.**

The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 provides for the institution of provident funds for employees in factories and other establishments.

- It is **administered by the Ministry of Labour & Employment**, Government of India.
- It is **one of the World's largest Social Security Organisations** in terms of clientele and the volume of financial transactions undertaken.

Source: IE

Demand for a Relief Package

Why in News?

The National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) have sought 200 billion dollars (about Rs 15 lakh crore) from the government as a relief package to minimise the economic impact of COVID-19.

The relief package demanded for the industry is around **10% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).**

Key Points

- **They have also called for a partial lifting of the lockdown** on construction sites to reduce job losses.
- NAREDCO also **called for suspending all cases under the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for the next six months** amid economic slowdown.

- NAREDCO has **compiled standard operating procedures guidelines** to ensure safety for people in and around construction sites.
- The real estate sector is **already facing a severe credit squeeze** after the collapse of IL & FS followed by **NBFCs Crisis/ Shadow Banking Stress**.
- The real estate sector accounts for **7% of the GDP and employs 11% of the country's population**.

About NAREDCO

- National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) was established as an **autonomous self-regulatory body in 1998**.
- It comes under the aegis of the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt. of India**.
- NAREDCO is hailed as the apex national body for the real estate industry.

About ASSOCHAM

- The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India is one of the highest trade associations in India.
- It was **established in 1920**.

Source TH

No Orders of Hydroxychloroquine to BCPL

Why in News

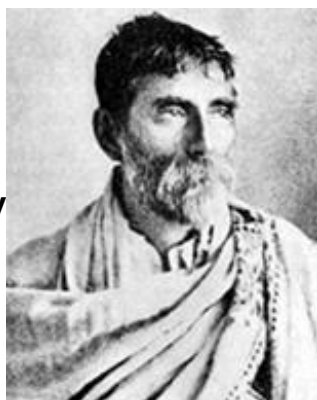
It has been alleged that the **central government is not giving orders to the Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BCPL) to produce anti-malarial drugs**.

Key Points

- The Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BCPL) is the **only Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) that produces the anti-malarial drug** in the country, i.e. manufactures **chloroquine phosphate**.
 - The **government-owned corporations are termed as Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** in India. In a PSU majority (51% or more) of the share capital is held by the central government or by any state government or partly by the central governments and partly by one or more state governments.
 - The **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audits government companies**.

- Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works Ltd., precursor of the Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd, **was formed by Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray on April 12, 1901.**
 - The company became the **first Indian Company to manufacture quality Chemicals**, Drugs, Pharmaceuticals and Home Products, employing indigenous technology, skill and raw materials.
 - The Management of Bengal Chemical was taken over by the Government of India and the **Union Government nationalized the Organization on December 15, 1980.** A new Government Company, Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BCPL) was launched on March 27, 1981.

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray



- Known as **“Father of Indian Chemistry”**, Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944) was a well-known Indian scientist and teacher and one of the first “modern” Indian chemical researchers.
- He **discovered the stable compound mercurous nitrite** in 1896.
- The **British Government** first honoured him with the imperial title of **CIE (Companion of the Indian Empire)**; and then with the **Knighthood** in 1919.
- In 1920, he was **elected General President of the Indian Science Congress.**
- As a nationalist he also wanted that the Bengalis should come up in the world of enterprise. He himself set an example by establishing a chemical firm called the **Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works (1901).**
- He was a true rationalist and was **completely against the caste system** and other irrational social systems. He persistently carried on this work of social reformation till he passed away.

Source: TH

Remote Monitor for Covid-19 Cases

Why in News

Recently, **Bharat Electronics Ltd.** and the **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh**, have jointly developed a **remote patient health monitoring system**.

Key Points

- **Use:** The remote patient health monitoring system **can be installed at homes or hospitals premises** to reduce the risk of exposure to healthcare workers to **Covid-19** while attending to persons undergoing isolation.
- **Features:** The device has **non-invasive sensors** and it **measures temperature, pulse rate, saturated oxygen level, and respiration rate**.
It **shows the severity of the patient's condition** in different colour codes.
- **Benefit:** The system is expected to **reduce the increasing demand of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** and logistics.
The system will also help to **generate hot spots using the system's data analytics software** so that authorities can contain these zones.
- **Functioning:** A **mobile app and Web browser** have been developed. People who show symptoms of infection get enrolled with AIIMS - Rishikesh.
 - The hospital will assess their complaints and if found necessary, will provide these individuals with a kit to help monitor their health parameters regularly.
 - Patient health parameters, along with patient location, are uploaded on a regular basis to a Centralised Command & Control Centre (CCC) on cloud using either the patient's mobile phone or integral GSM SIM card.

Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)

- BEL is an **Indian state-owned aerospace and defence company**. It is a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Defence of India.
- It primarily **manufactures advanced electronic products** for the Indian Armed Forces.
- It has been granted **Navratna** status.
- BEL also develops **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** and **Voter-verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs)**.

Source: TH

Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary

- Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is the only sanctuary in **Andhra Pradesh** with a population **of Asian elephants**.
- The sanctuary is covered by **southern tropical dry deciduous and thorn forests**. Some of the important flora consists of Albizia amara, Acacia, Lagerstroemia, Ficus, bamboo, and a species which is a regeneration of Santalum album.

- Apart from **Elephant**, some of the animals found in the sanctuary are: sloth bear, panther, cheetal, chowsingha, sambar, porcupine, wild boar, jungle cat, jackal, jungle fowl, starred tortoise and slender loris.

Asian Elephant

- There are **three subspecies of Asian elephant – the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan.**

The Indian has the widest range and accounts for the majority of the remaining elephants on the continent.

- Escalation of poaching, habitat loss, **human-elephant conflict** and mistreatment in captivity are some common threats to both African and Asian elephants.
- **African elephants are listed as “vulnerable” and Asian elephants as “endangered” in IUCN Red List of threatened species.**
- The elephant has been accorded the highest possible protection under the Indian wildlife law through its listing under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) status- Appendix I.**
 - Appendix I lists species that are the **most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.**
- The Government of India has launched various initiatives for conservation of elephants. Few important initiatives are:
 - **Project Elephant** launched by the **Government of India in the year 1992** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme.** Elephant census is conducted once in 5 years under the aegis of Project elephant.
 - Establishment of elephant reserves and adoption of the **“World Elephant Day” (August 12)** to help conserve and protect elephants in India and improve their welfare.
 - **‘Gaj Yatra’** a nationwide awareness campaign to celebrate elephants and highlight the necessity of securing elephant corridors.
 - The **Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)**, had come out with a publication on the **right of passage in 101 elephant corridors** of the country in 2017, stressed on the need for greater surveillance and protection of elephant corridors.
 - The **Monitoring the Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme launched in 2003** is an international collaboration that tracks trends in information related to the illegal killing of elephants from across Africa and Asia, to monitor effectiveness of field conservation efforts.

Source: TH
