



# drishti

## News Analysis (16 Apr, 2020)

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### US Halts its WHO Funding

#### Why in News

The **United States** (US) has decided to cut off US payments to the **World Health Organisation** (WHO) during the **Covid-19** pandemic.

#### Key Points

- **Reasons:** The US has accused WHO for **failing to curb the early spread** of the **coronavirus**.
  - It has been claimed by the US that the **outbreak could have been contained at its source** and lives could have been saved if the **United Nations** (UN) health agency (i.e. WHO) has done a better job.
  - The US has criticised the **WHO for being China-centric** and has alleged that earlier WHO had criticized US's ban on travel from and to China.
  - This comes when the **global case load approaches 2 million**, including **over 1 lakh deaths**. The **US has seen the most cases** (over 6 lakh) and deaths (over 26,000) **despite being the highest contributor** (almost 15%) to the WHO.
  - However, the US has made it clear that it would **continue to engage with the WHO in pursuit of meaningful reforms**.
- **Other Criticisms:** Most countries closed down air travel at the first stage but the **WHO took a stand against travel and trade restrictions on China**.
  - The **International Health Regulations Emergency Committee** urged countries to be prepared, but **did not recommend any travel or trade restriction**.
  - According to the **National Centre for Disease Control**, **WHO officials rejected Indian concerns saying that there was no human to human transmission**.

- **Impact:** For the WHO, the **loss of about 15% of its total funding is bound to have an impact the world over.**  
However, unless other countries do the same as the US, the move may not severely hamper WHO operations.
- **Criticism of US Stand:** The **UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres** has held that WHO is absolutely critical in the global fight to combat Covid-19 and **this is not the time to end support and reduce resources** for the operations.
- **India's Stand:** India has **reacted cautiously** to this announcement, **avoiding an official response** and maintaining the country's focus now is containment and management of the outbreak.

## Source of WHO's Funds

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- It is **funded by countries, philanthropic organisations, other UN organisations** etc.
  - **Voluntary donations** from member states contribute 35.41%, **assessed contributions** are 15.66%, **philanthropic organisations account** for 9.33%, **UN organisations contribute** about 8.1% and the rest comes from **myriad sources.**
  - The **US contributes almost 15%** of the WHO's total funding and almost **31% of the member states' donations**, the **largest chunk in both cases.**
  - **India contributes 1% of member states' donations.**
- **Countries** decide **how much they pay** and **may also choose not to.**

## Spending of WHO's Funds

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The WHO is **involved in various programmes.**

- In 2018-19, 19.36% (about \$1 bn) was spent on **polio eradication**, 8.77% on increasing **access to essential health and nutrition services**, 7% on **vaccine preventable diseases** and about 4.36% on **prevention and control of outbreaks.**
- The **American continent** received \$62.2 mn for WHO projects. That is where most of WHO funding comes from and the least of it goes.
- The **African countries** received \$1.6 bn for WHO projects and **South East Asian countries** (including India) received \$375 mn.

**India is a member state of the WHO South East Asia Region.**

## Spending Priorities of WHO

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- The **annual programme of work** is passed by WHO's decision-making body, the **World Health Assembly**.
  - It is held **annually in Geneva**.
  - It is attended by **delegates from all member states** and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
  - **Functions:** To determine WHO policies, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.
- The decision on which country gets how much depends on the situation in the countries.
- The **WHO's 13<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work (2019-23)** lays down: **"Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of diseases, especially communicable diseases, is a common danger."**

## WHO's Involvement in India

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- **India** became a party to the **WHO Constitution on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1948** and the **first session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was held on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October 1948**, in India.
- The **WHO India Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) 2019-2023** has been developed jointly by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** and the **WHO India country office**.
  - The CCS's **strategic priorities** are to accelerate progress on Universal Health Coverage, promote health and wellness by addressing determinants of health, better protect the population against health emergencies and enhance India's global leadership in health.
- On the ground, WHO has been a key partner in the **immunisation programme (Mission Indradhanush)**, **tackling Tuberculosis (TB)** and **neglected diseases such as leprosy and kala azar** and nutrition programmes across states.

## WHO and India During Covid-19

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- WHO has been **working closely with the MoHFW and various state governments on preparedness and response measures for Covid-19**, including surveillance and contact tracing; laboratory and research protocols; risk communications; hospital preparedness; training on infection prevention and control and cluster containment plan.

- However, **India has largely built its own strategy** covering its reluctance to test, the early travel restrictions to and from China and the lockdown.
  - India imposed a **lockdown** when cases were just 341 (on 22nd March 2020).
  - India **showed resistance to mass testing** which is akin to the US's strategy.
  - India has also **taken a call on universal use of masks** when the WHO maintained that masks protect others rather than the wearer and need not be mandatory.

**Source: IE**

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## Rupee Slips Due to Covid-19

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### Why in News

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The rupee slipped 17 paise against the dollar on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, amid **heightened uncertainty over the economy** as the **Covid-19** pandemic continues to spread.

### Key Points

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- The rupee closed at a record low of 76.44 against the dollar on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020. Rupee was 76.27 against dollar on the previous day.
- However, **the dollar index** was trading 0.3% higher at 99.19. The U.S. Dollar Index (USDIX) is an index (or measure) of the value of the United States dollar **relative to a basket of foreign currencies**.
- It can be noted that the rupee has **weakened about 7% against the dollar in 2020** and has hit a record intraday low of 76.55.
  - This implies that the **rupee has become less valuable with respect to the dollar, implying depreciation** of the rupee.
- According to some experts, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has not intervened strongly in the market to stop rupee depreciation**.
  - They expect the RBI to intervene once the rupee breaches the 77 to a dollar.
- In its macroeconomic review, RBI had said if the rupee depreciates 5% from the baseline (i.e. Rs 75 per dollar), inflation could rise by 20 basis points (bps) while **the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth could be higher by about 15 bps via increased net exports**.

### Currency Depreciation

- Currency depreciation is a **fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate system.**
  - In a floating exchange rate system, **market forces (based on demand and supply of a currency)** determine the value of a currency.
- **Rupee depreciation** means that rupee has become **less valuable with respect to dollar.**
  - It means that the rupee is now **weaker** than what it used to be earlier.
  - **For example:** \$1 used to equal to Rs.70, now \$1 is equal to Rs. 76, implying that the rupee has depreciated relative to the dollar i.e. it takes more rupees to purchase a dollar.
- **Some of the factors that influence the value of a currency:**
  - Inflation
  - Interest rates
  - Trade deficit
  - Macroeconomic policies
  - Equity market.
- Currency depreciation **increases a country's export activity as its products and services become cheaper to buy.**
- The Reserve Bank of India intervenes in the currency market to support the rupee as a **weak domestic unit can increase a country's import bill.**
- There are a **variety of methods** by which RBI intervenes:
  - It can intervene directly in the currency market by **buying and selling dollars.**
    - If the RBI wishes to increase the rupee value, then it can sell dollars and when it needs to bring down rupee value, it can buy dollars.
  - The central bank can also influence the value of rupee by the way of **monetary policy.**
    - RBI can adjust the **repo rate** (the rate at which RBI lends to banks) and the liquidity ratio (the portion of money banks are required to invest in government bonds) to control rupee.

**Source: TH**

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## India to Receive Normal Monsoon: IMD

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** has observed that India will likely have a **normal monsoon**, with a **chance of above normal rain** in August and September, 2020.

## Key Points

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- **Every year, the IMD issues a two-stage forecast.**
  - The **first one in April** and the **second one in the last week of May**, which is a **more detailed forecast** and also illustrates how the monsoon will spread over the country.
- **Forecast**
  - The **June-September rainfall** accounts for **75% of the country's annual rainfall**.
    - Quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal rainfall is likely to be 100% of the **Long Period Average (LPA)** with a model error of  $\pm 5\%$ .
    - The LPA of the season rainfall over the country as a whole for the period 1961-2010 is 88 cm. IMD has **officially redefined the definition of 'normal' rainfall and reduced it by 1 cm to 88 cms.**
  - The **Indian Ocean Dipole**, a temperature anomaly in the ocean that can increase monsoon rain, is also **expected to be in a "neutral" state** during the monsoon.
  - According to the statistical model, there is a **41% forecast probability of a normal monsoon.**
- The expectation of excess rain comes from a forecast by the **dynamical model**, according to which, there is a **high probability (70%)** for the **rainfall to be above normal to excess.**
- **Comparison to 2019 Forecast**
  - In April, 2019, the IMD said that the monsoon would be **near normal** or a **slightly below normal.**
  - However, **India ended up with excess rainfall**, or the **maximum rainfall in a quarter century**, largely owing to torrential rain in August and September from the unusual warming in the Indian Ocean.

## Models for Forecasting

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- **Dynamical Model:** It is also called the **Monsoon Mission Coupled Forecast System**. It relies on the **supercomputers, mathematically simulating the physics of the ocean and the atmosphere.**
  - This model is better at forecasting the state of the weather a week or two in advance and is not yet considered reliable by meteorologists in forecasting the monsoon.
- **Statistical Model:** It takes into **consideration the global weather models** pointing to **negligible chances of El Nino**, a warming of the central equatorial Pacific which is associated with the drying up of monsoon rain. The **IMD relies on this model.**
  - In **any given year**, there is a **33% chance of a normal monsoon** that's why there is **high confidence that the monsoon in 2020 would be normal.**

## El Niño

- Under **normal conditions**, the **west tropical Pacific is warmer than its eastern basin**. The warmer area of the ocean is also a **source for convection** and is associated with **cloudiness and rainfall**.
- During El Niño years, the **warmth shifts to Central and East Tropical Pacific** and along with it, cloudiness and rainfall.
- El Niño has been **found to impact almost half the world triggering droughts in Australia, India, southern Africa and floods in Peru, Ecuador, the United States, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Colorado River basin**.
- However, there has been **no direct correlation between the ENSO** (El Niño Southern Oscillation) events and the monsoon established yet.
- **Other acronyms related to El Niño:**
  - **Southern Oscillation Index**
    - It gives an **indication of the development and intensity of El Niño or La Niña**.
    - The SOI is **calculated on the basis of the atmospheric pressure differences** between the **South Pacific Ocean** and **Australia**.
    - Sustained **positive SOI values** are indicative of **La Niña** conditions while **negative values** suggest **El Niño** conditions.
  - **El Niño Southern Oscillation**
    - It refers to the **oscillation between the El Niño and the La Niña**.
    - ENSO **shifts irregularly back and forth between El Niño and La Niña every two to seven years**.
    - Each phase triggers predictable disruptions of temperature, precipitation and winds disrupting large-scale air movements in the tropics, triggering a cascade of global side effects.

**Source: TH**

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## Measures to Deal with Economic Hardship

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### Why in News

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Recently, prominent economists Amartya Sen, Raghuram Rajan and Abhijit Banerjee have raised concerns and also suggested measures to deal with economic hardships created by the **Covid-19 lockdown**.

### Key Points

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- **Risk of Defiance of Lockdown Orders:** In the scenario of extended lockdown, a huge number of **people will be pushed into dire poverty or even starvation** by the combination of the **loss of their livelihoods** and **interruptions in the standard delivery mechanisms**.

This opens up the risk of **large-scale defiance of lockdown orders**.

- **Reassurance to People:** The government needs to reassure people that it does care and their minimum well-being will be secure. Moreover, the government has the resources to do this.

The stocks of food at the **Food Corporation of India** stood at 77 million tons in March 2020, more than **three times the “buffer stock norms”**. This is also likely to grow over the next few weeks as the **Rabi crop comes in**.

- **Extend PDS Beyond 3 Months:** Although the government has offered a **supplementary Public Distribution System (PDS) provision of 5 kg/person/month for the coming three months**. However, it is likely that three months will not be enough, since even if the lockdown ends soon, the process of reopening the economy will take time.
- **Multidimensional Challenges:** The starvation is just one of the worries, the **unexpected loss of income and savings can have serious consequences**. E.g.
  - Farmers need money to buy seeds and fertilizer for the next planting season.
  - Shopkeepers need to fill their shelves again.
  - Many others have to repay the loan that is already due.
- **Improvement Needed:** The government has partly recognized this in the **cash transfers it has promised to certain groups** under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package** but the amounts are both small and narrowly targeted.

### Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- FCI is a **Public Sector Undertaking**, under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.
- It was established as a **statutory body** in 1965 under the **Food Corporations Act 1964**. It was established against the backdrop of a major shortage of grains, especially wheat.

### Public distribution system (PDS)

- The **PDS is an Indian food Security System** established **under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.
- PDS evolved as a **system of management of scarcity** through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.



- PDS is operated under the **joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments**.
  - The **Central Government**, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for **procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation** of food grains to the State Governments.
  - The **operational responsibilities** including allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, **issue of Ration Cards** and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the **State Governments**.
- Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely **wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene** are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc.

## Issues Involved

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- **Exclusionary PDS:** A substantial fraction (over 10 crore) of **the poor are excluded from the PDS rolls**, for one reason or another (such as identification barriers to get a ration card), and the supplementary provision (of 5 kg/person/month for the coming three months) only applies to those who are already on it.
- **Reliance on Outdated Data:** The exclusion in the Public Distribution System is because of **outdated 2011 census data** being used to calculate State-wise **National Food Security Act (NFSA) coverage**.
  - Under the NFSA, the PDS is supposed to cover 75% of the population in rural areas and 50% of the population in urban areas, which **works out to 67% of the total population**, using the rural-urban population ratio in 2011.
  - India's population was about 121 crore in 2011 and so PDS covered approximately 80 crore people. However, applying the 67% ratio to a projected population of 137 crore for 2020, PDS coverage today should be around 92 crore.
- **Issue of Pending Applications:** Many **State governments are reluctant to issue new ration cards beyond the numbers** that will be provided for by the Central quota.
 

For example, there are about seven lakh pending applications for ration cards in Jharkhand, because the State government stopped issuing new ration cards several years ago to avoid exceeding the numbers provided for by the Central government.

## Way Forward

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- **Giving away some of the existing stock**, at a time of emergency created by Covid-19 would make perfect sense and it should not be portrayed as costly.

- The government should **use every means** at its disposal to make sure that no one is starving. This includes:
  - **Expanding** the PDS.
  - Setting up **public canteens for migrants** and others who are away from home.
  - Sending the **equivalent of the school meal to the homes** of the children who are now stuck at home (as Kerala is already doing).
  - Making use of reputed local NGOs that often have a reach among the most marginalized that exceeds that of the government.
- **Sending 5000 rupees to the Jan Dhan accounts** of the identified poor households. The poor can be identified by the idea of using the **MGNREGA** rolls from 2019, plus those covered by **Jan Arogya** and **Ujjwala Yojana**.
- **Issuing temporary ration cards** — perhaps for six months — with minimal checks to everyone who wants ration cards.

**Source: IE**

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## NHRC on Public's Rights

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### Why in News

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The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has asked the Centre to issue an advisory to all States and Union Territories to **implement the ongoing lockdown without violating the human rights of the public**.

Previously, the NHRC has also asked the Ministry of Home Affairs to **address the concerns of the mentally ill people** on the streets during the lockdown to check the spread of the novel coronavirus.

### Key Points

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- In order to effectively implement the lock down guidelines, the **public servants**, sometimes under tremendous pressure, **tend to deal with the people**, especially the ill-informed poor labourers, **in a very harsh manner** undermining their rights.
- The **NHRC** through an advisory wants to ensure that the public servants behave in a sensible manner with the people, particularly belonging to vulnerable sections, **respecting human rights relating to their life, liberty and dignity**.
- It has said that In the meantime necessary directions may be issued by the Ministry to all the States and Union Territories, to ensure that **persons suffering from any kind of mental ailments under their jurisdiction are provided with proper counselling** towards necessary precautions for their personal care and protection from the virus and **not deprived of basic amenities** like food, shelter and medical care etc.

# National Human Rights Commission

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- **Statutory Body:** NHRC was established on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1993. The statute under which it is established is the **Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993** as amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.  
The PHRA Act also provides for the creation of a State Human Rights Commission at the state level.
- **In Line with Paris Principles:** **Paris Principles** were adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in October 1991, and were endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1993.
- **Watchdog of Human Rights in the country:** The NHRC is an embodiment of India's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights.  
**Section 2(1)(d) of the PHRA defines Human Rights** as the rights relating to **life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual** guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
- **Composition:** The commission is a multi-member body consisting of a chairman and four members. A **person who has been the Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court** is a **chairman**.
- **Appointment:** The chairman and members are **appointed by the President on the recommendations of a six-member committee** consisting of the Prime Minister as its head, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament and the Union Home Minister.
- **Tenure:** The chairman and members **hold office for a term of three years or until they attain the age of 70 years**, whichever is earlier.  
The **President can remove the chairman or any member** from the office under some circumstances.

- **Role and Function**

- It has all the **powers of a civil court** and its proceedings have a judicial character.
- It is empowered to **utilise the services of any officer or investigation agency** of the Central government or any state government for the purpose of investigating complaints of human rights violation.
- It can **look into a matter within one year of its occurrence**, i.e the Commission is not empowered to inquire into any matter after the expiry of one year from the date on which the act constituting violation of human rights is alleged to have been committed.
- The **functions of the commission are mainly recommendatory in nature**. It has no power to punish the violators of human rights, nor to award any relief including monetary relief to the victim. Its **recommendations are not binding on the concerned government or authority**. But, it should be informed about the action taken on its recommendations within one month.
- It has **limited role**, powers and jurisdiction **with respect to the violation of human rights by the members of the armed forces**.
- It is **not empowered to act when human rights violations through private parties take place**.

**Source: TH**

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## Undertrials Freed to Decongest Jails

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### Why in News

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According to the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)**, around **11,077 undertrials have been released** from prisons nationwide as **part of the mission to decongest jails following the Covid-19 pandemic**.

### Key Points

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- NALSA has been providing **assistance to prisoners who are eligible to be released on parole or interim bail** under the relaxed norms, through its panel of lawyers.
  - The **Supreme Court has ordered all States and Union Territories to set up high-level panels** which would consider releasing all convicts who have been jailed for upto seven years on parole to decongest jails in an attempt to contain the Covid-19 outbreak.
  - The Bench suggested that **undertrials awaiting for offences entailing maximum sentence of seven years** also be extended a similar benefit.

- Local legal services authorities are actively assisting the high-level panels for identifying undertrials who could be released on bail during the present scenario.
- Till now, responses received from 232 districts reflect that **around 11,077 undertrials and 5,981 convicts have been released.**

## National Legal Services Authority

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- **Statutory Body:** It has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** to provide free legal services to the **weaker sections of the society** and to organize Lok Adalats (an **alternative dispute redressal mechanism**) for amicable settlement of disputes.
  - **Section 12** of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 prescribes the criteria for giving legal services to the eligible persons.
- **In line with Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 39A** of the Constitution of India provides that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
  - **Articles 14 and 22(1)** also make it obligatory for the State to ensure **equality before law** and a legal system which **promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.**
- **Chairman:** The **Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief** and the **second senior most Judge of the Supreme Court of India** is the **Executive Chairman of the Authority.**
- **At State and District Level:** State Legal Services Authority has been constituted to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA. In every District, the District Legal Services Authority has been constituted to implement legal services programmes in the district.
- It can be noted that the role played by NALSA and its networks is very much relevant to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goal-16**, which seeks to "**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**".

**Source: TH**

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## Personal Protective Equipment for Sanitation Workers

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### Why in News

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The **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC)** has issued advisory to **municipalities, panchayats** urging them to ensure that all sanitation workers are provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to remain safe during the **novel coronavirus pandemic**.

## Key Points

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- All local bodies were asked to put in place a standard operating procedure for the safety of sanitation staff.
- There should be mandatory orientation for sanitation workers on Covid-19, social distancing norms and precautionary measures.
- The local bodies were asked to provide equipment, including masks, gloves, gumboots and jackets, as well as soaps and hand sanitisers for helping maintain hygiene.

## National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation

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- National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC) is a wholly owned Government of India Undertaking under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
- It was set up in 1997 as a **“Not for Profit”** Company under **Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956** (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013).
- It is an apex Corporation for the all round **socio-economic upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis, Scavengers and their dependents** throughout India, through various **loan and non-loan based schemes**.
- NSKFDC is also playing a vital role in elimination of **manual scavenging** - the worst surviving **symbol of untouchability**.
- NSKFDC has been designated as the Nodal Agency for implementation of the Central Sector Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

### Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956

- Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 provides an alternative to those who want to promote charity without creating a Trust or a Society for the purpose.  
It can be noted that **non-profit companies are established under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013** which broadly is **similar to Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956**.

- It allows the formation of a company existing as a legal entity in its own right, separate from the person promoting it.
  - However any company under this section must **necessarily re-invest any and all income towards promoting the said object or charity.**
  - In essence, unlike a regular company, where owners and shareholders can make profits or receive dividends, no money gets out of a Section 25 company.
- **Benefits under Section 25:**
  - Exempt from **statutory requirements of minimum paid-up capital.**
  - They are much easier to run than Trusts and Societies, as board meetings require a **smaller quorum** and requirements for calling such meetings are less rigid.
  - It is easier to increase the number of directors.
  - It is easier for people donating money to join or leave or transfer shares to others.
  - Such a company is obliged to fulfill **far less stringent book-keeping** and auditing requirements as against a regular company. These enjoy **significant tax benefits.** Such companies are also exempt from stamp duty payments.
  - Depending on how it is registered under the Income-Tax Act, companies could benefit from **income-tax exemptions**, or from the provision wherein people donating money to these companies receive income deductions in their income-tax liability.

**Source: TH**

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## NGOs to Update on Covid-19 Fight Every Month

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has **asked all Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with foreign contribution licences** to update the government on their efforts towards containing the **Covid-19** outbreak every month.

### Key Points

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- NGOs receiving funds from overseas **under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010**, have to report their Covid-19 related activities by the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.

- This was the MHA's second request to NGOs in controlling the spread of the novel coronavirus.
  - Earlier **MHA had requested NGOs to aid and supplement** the efforts of the government and local administration in fighting the spread of Covid-19.
    - The MHA had indicated the broad areas in which the NGOs could offer support, which included **setting up community kitchens** for migrants and the homeless, and **providing shelter to homeless** daily wage workers and the unemployed poor.
- The request for assistance from NGOs comes after a **concerted government crackdown on the social sector**, which led to **significant fall in overseas funding for NGOs**.
  - Over the last five years, the MHA has deregistered as many as 14,500 NGOs, and has, over the last three years, cancelled the foreign contribution licences of over 6,600 nonprofits for violations of the provisions of the FCRA.
  - According to the government, FCRA-registered NGOs had received a total Rs 2,244.77 crore in 2018-19 (as on November 28) as compared to Rs 16,902.41 crore in 2017-18.

## Non-Governmental Organisations

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- Worldwide, the term '**NGO**' is used to describe a body that **is neither part of a government nor a conventional for-profit business organisation**.
- NGOs are groups of ordinary citizens that are involved in a wide range of activities that may have **charitable, social, political, religious or other interests**.
- NGOs are helpful in implementing **government schemes at the grassroots**.
- In India, **NGOs can be registered** under a plethora of Acts such as the **Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, Religious Endowments Act, 1863, Indian Trusts Act**, etc.
- India has possibly **the largest number of active NGOs** in the world, a study commissioned by the government put the number of NGOs in 2009 at 33 lakh.
  - That was one **NGO for less than 400 Indians**, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres.
- Ministries such as Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Department, etc provide funding to a handful of NGOs.
- NGOs also receive funds from abroad, if they are registered with the Home Ministry under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)**.
  - Without this, no NGO can receive cash or anything of value **higher than Rs 25,000**.

### Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010



- Foreign funding of voluntary organizations in India is regulated under FCRA act and is implemented by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- The Act ensures that the recipients of foreign contributions adhere to the stated **purpose for which such contribution has been obtained**.
- Under the Act, organisations are required to **register themselves every five years**.

**Source: IE**

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## Civil Defence Volunteers Against Covid-19

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### Why in News

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More than 50,000 **Civil Defence volunteers** are assisting the local administration in implementing the **measures to contain the spread of Covid-19**.

**Provisions** under the **State Disaster Relief Fund** have been made by the central government for procurement of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs)** to be used by the deployed workers.

### Key Points

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- **All States and Union Territories barring Ladakh, Daman & Diu, and Puducherry have deployed** civil defence personnel.  
**Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Assam** have taken the **lead** in using their services.
- The volunteers have been deployed under the **command of District Magistrates** to **assist the local administration** in implementing the Covid-19 guidelines and policies effectively.
- **Contributions of the Volunteers:**
  - **Supplementing the local administration in conducting surveillance of suspected and confirmed** Covid-19 cases by working as rapid response teams.
  - **Manning hunger helplines** and **assisting elderly citizens**.
  - Helping in the **maintenance of essential supplies**, like packing and home distribution of ration and medicines.
  - **Supplementing health workers** and also carrying out **community awareness drives** on social distancing and hygiene practices.
  - **Distributing PPEs, masks and sanitisers**.
  - **Setting up community kitchens** and **shelters for migrant workers** and other stranded persons.

### Civil Defence

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- Civil Defence measures are **designed to deal with immediate emergency conditions, protect the public and restore vital services and facilities that have been destroyed or damaged by disaster.**
- These operate under the **Civil Defence Act, 1968** and associated rules and regulations.
  - The Act was **amended in 2009** and in **2010, disaster management** was included as an additional role.
  - It is **applicable throughout the nation.**
- Although it is a Central law, **Section 4 of the Civil Defence Act empowers State governments to raise corps at the local administration level as per their requirement.**

The **District Magistrate, District Collector or Deputy Commissioner** is designated as **Controller of the Civil Defence.**
- **Objectives:**
  - To save the life, to minimize loss of property, to maintain continuity of production and to keep high up the morale of the people.
  - During times of war and emergencies, to guard the hinterland, support the Armed forces, mobilise the citizens and help civil administration.
  - It not only includes the management of damage against conventional weapons but also the management of threat perceptions against Nuclear weapons, Biological & Chemical Warfare and natural and man-made disasters.
- It is **primarily organised on a voluntary basis except for a small nucleus of paid staff and establishment** which is augmented during emergencies.
- **Central Financial Assistance:** The central government **reimburses 25% of the expenditure (50% for North-eastern states except for Assam)** incurred by the State Government on the authorized items of Civil Defence for raising, training and equipping of Civil Defence Service.

**Source: TH**

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## Social Recession due to Covid-19

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### Why in News

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As the **coronavirus pandemic** threatens to cause an economic recession, it **may also cause a “social recession”.**

### Key Points

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- **Social Recession:** It is a collapse in social contacts.  
Just after a few weeks of social distancing and self-isolation because of Covid-19, we have noticed the **decline in our social interactions** and **might have felt the change in our mental and physical health.**
- **Possible Impact of social recession (Flight or Fight Response):** Human beings thrive on social engagements and are wired to stay connected. When these connections are threatened or unavailable, the nervous system may go out of order and many negative effects on the body follow:
  - Both loneliness (the feeling of being alone) and social isolation (physical state of being alone) can **trigger a cascade of stress hormones** that produce **physiological changes like increased heart rate, increased muscle tension and thickening of blood.** Together, these physiological changes are called the **fight-or-flight response.**
  - **Fight-or-flight response:** In response to stress, the body's sympathetic nervous system is activated and it **stimulates the adrenal glands** triggering the release of adrenaline and noradrenaline.
  - These hormones, together with direct actions of autonomic nerves, cause the heart to beat faster, respiration rate to increase blood vessels in the arms and legs to dilate, digestive process to change and glucose levels (sugar energy) in the bloodstream to increase to deal with the emergency.
  - Fight-or-flight response has evolved as a **survival mechanism enabling us to cope with physical and psychological threats.**
- Different **Studies related to Social Recession**
  - A recent meta-analysis published in Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews revealed that people who are more socially isolated have **higher levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) and fibrinogen**
    - CRP is a **protein made by the liver.** CRP levels in the blood increase when there is a condition causing inflammation somewhere in the body.
    - Fibrinogen is a soluble protein that helps blood to clot.
    - Both of these are associated with chronic inflammation and poor physical and mental health.
  - Another study in Perspectives on Psychological Science indicated that lack of social connection and living alone can be detrimental to a person's health, respectively **increasing mortality risk by 29% and 32%.**
  - They also pointed out that social isolation can lead to several chronic conditions like **hypertension, increased heart rate, increased levels of stress hormones and even accelerated ageing.**

- **Coping with isolation**

- Usually when things get tough, people tend to lean towards personal relationships to seek their advice and support. But, this cannot be done during lockdown.
- There are no quick solutions to deal with increasing anxiety due to social isolation. However, some approaches can help:
  - People have to begin by acknowledging that these are situations unlike what they have seen before and it is quite **normal to feel anxious and lonely**.
  - It is important to know that the whole world is in the same state as them, and **everyone is together**.
  - People have to use this time to **establish forgotten connections** via technology and catch up with friends and family..
  - Most importantly, they should put the focus back on **self-care, eat well, exercise regularly, find ways to calm and focus on themselves**.

Source: TH

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## Covid-19 Impact on Digital Media

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### Why in News

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The **Covid-19 pandemic** has impacted the internet giant's Google, Facebook as well as media houses.

### Key Points

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- **Covid-19 Impact on Media**
  - The media sector is facing deep cutbacks (reduction in expenditure) resulting due to an **intense economic slump and a reduction in advertising revenues** that many news outlets depend on because of lockdowns.
  - The New York Times has estimated that news outlets have **cut 28,000 jobs as a result of the health crisis and subsequent economic impact**.
- **Assistance to Media Sector**
  - Google has announced that it would **launch an emergency fund** to help **local news outlets** struggling to maintain operations in the face of Covid-19.
  - Earlier Facebook also announced a donation **of \$100 million to support news organizations** globally hurting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Impact on Advertising Business**

- Google and Facebook's advertising businesses, which have roughly tripled in combined size over the past five years, may be **headed for a rare fall** owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Once-abundant travel and entertainment ads have all but disappeared** from Google search.
- The **prices for Facebook advertisements are at record lows:**
  - The prices of Facebook ads have declined 35% to 50% on average in recent weeks.
- Wall Street analysts have estimated that **annual revenues would decline** for the first time in the history of the two companies.

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- Google had started a **"sensitive events" policy** last month, which restricts ads on coronavirus content.
  - On March 9, 2020 it also placed a **temporary ban on ads selling masks, citing a supply shortage for medical professionals.**
- Facebook banned the placement of predatory ads for masks, sanitisers and other personal protective gear, and it eliminated nearly all mask ads across the social network.

**Source: TH**

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