Indian Government’s Latest Moves - COVID-19

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- S&T

- Combination of Hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin against COVID-19 instead of HIV drugs
  - According to the new clinical management guidelines issued on 31st March, 2020, a combination of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) - used for treatment of auto-immune disorders, and azithromycin - the antibiotic has been recommended for use in severe patients.
  - The earlier guidelines, dated 17th March, 2020, which included use of Anti HIV drugs - Ritonavir and Lopinavir in high risk patients, now stand repealed.
  - Reasons:
    - No specific antivirals have been proven to be effective as per currently available data.
    - The azithromycin-hydroxychloroquine combination is part of an upcoming multi-country trial anchored by the World Health Organization to examine the efficacy of various drug combinations against COVID-19.
    - India has announced its decision to be part of the WHO global trials, which are also looking at these two drugs.

- Portal for Stranded Foreigners in India
  - The Ministry of Tourism has come up with a portal titled ‘Stranded in India’ to disseminate information regarding the services that can be availed by foreign tourists who are stuck far away from their home land.
  - The Portal has information on the Ministry of External Affairs control centres and state-based/regional tourism support infrastructure. It also lists the COVID-19 helpline numbers for tourists.
  - On 19th March, 2020, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had issued an advisory stating that no international commercial passenger flights will operate here from March 23 to March 29. The advisory was later extended and all international flight operations remain suspended till April 14.
    - The government has announced visa extensions for stranded foreigners till flight operations resume.

IITs Support to the Indian Government

- The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) has offered a range of inexpensive solutions developed by their faculty to assist the government in the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak.
- From low-cost ventilators and testing kits to personal protective equipment for health workers, the directors of IIT-Delhi, IIT-Guwahati, IIT-Bombay and IIT-Kanpur shared their institute’s work on containing the spread of the virus with the Government.
- The institutions have also sought the government’s assistance in facilitating tie-up with Public Sector Units (PSUs) to scale up production of prototypes and to mitigate difficulties faced in procuring raw material because of the lockdown.
- Example: IIT-Guwahati has offered to pitch in with its 3D-printed full-face shield and headgear for health workers, robotic cart to deliver food to isolation wards and high-grade sanitiser. It needs the government’s help to tie up with a PSU for large-scale
manufacturing.

- Indian Institutes of Technology are apex institutions for engineering education and research. At present, there are twenty three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

All are governed by the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961 which has declared them as “Institutions of national importance”, and lays down their powers, duties, framework for governance etc.