N-95 masks

Context

- The Government has notified N-95 Masks as an essential commodity under **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**.
- Thus, **hoarding, black-marketing of the essential commodity** is punishable offence *under the Act*.
- To keep check on the hoarding, black-marketing of the essential commodity, **NPPA** in exercise of the powers conferred under **National Disaster Management Act, 2005** had directed all States/ UT Governments to ensure sufficient availability of *surgical and protective Masks, Hand Sanitizers and Gloves* at prices not exceeding the Maximum Retail Price printed on the pack size vide Orders dated 13th March 2020.

N95 Respirators

- An N95 respirator is a *respiratory protective device* designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very *efficient filtration of airborne particles*.
- The 'N95' designation means that when subjected to careful testing, the respirator blocks at least **95 percent** of very small (0.3 micron) test particles.
- If properly fitted, the filtration capabilities of N95 respirators exceed those of face masks.
- However, even a properly fitted N95 respirator does not completely eliminate the risk of illness or death.

Comparing Surgical Masks and Surgical N95 Respirators

- The FDA regulates surgical masks and surgical N95 respirators differently based on their intended use.
- A **surgical mask** is a *loose-fitting*, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. These are *often referred to as face masks*, although not all face masks are regulated as surgical masks. Note that the edges of the mask are not designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth.
- An **N95 respirator** is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles. Note that the edges of the respirator are designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth. Surgical N95 Respirators are commonly used in healthcare settings and are a subset of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFRs), often referred to as N95s.

The similarities among surgical masks and surgical N95s are:

- They are tested for **fluid resistance**, **filtration efficiency** (particulate filtration efficiency and bacterial filtration efficiency), **flammability and biocompatibility**.
- They should not be shared or reused.