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.