

# 8 April 2020 UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS 1 Related

### Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

#### 1. Gender violence is a shadow pandemic: UN

##### Context:

The UN Women has urged member-states to include the prevention of violence against women in their action plans on [COVID-19](#) and consider shelters and helplines essential services, calling the rise in gender-based violence a shadow pandemic.

##### Details:

- According to UN Women, globally, 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months.
- The number is likely to increase as security, health and money worries heighten tensions and strains are accentuated by cramped and confined living conditions.

- It says, according to emerging data, violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified.
- As per data compiled by the U.N. body, France has seen a 30% increase in domestic violence since the lockdown.
- In Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence cases have increased by 25% since the lockdown on March 20 and Cyprus (30%), Singapore (33%) have also registered an increase in calls.
- Canada, Germany, Spain, the U.K. and the U.S. have also registered an increase in cases of domestic violence and demand for emergency shelter.
- Also, Interpol has warned that with a majority of people working from home due to the pandemic, there was a change in the pattern of crimes. The lockdown period has led to a significant increase in domestic violence.

#### Way forward:

- Helplines, psychosocial support and online counselling should be boosted.
- Technology-based solutions such as SMS, online tools and networks must be used to expand social support.
- Alternative arrangements must be made to reach women with no access to phones or Internet.
- Police and justice services must mobilise to ensure that incidents of violence against women and girls are given high priority.

## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: HEALTH

#### 1. India lifts ban on export of hydroxychloroquine

##### Context:

India has rescinded its earlier ban on the export of malaria drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), which is now being used in countries such as the U.S. as a possible line of treatment for COVID-19.

##### Background:

- In a notification on March 25 2020, the government placed HCQ on a restricted items list, and then put a blanket ban on any export of the drug on April 4, 2020.

##### The Geo-Politics of Medical Aid:

- In view of the humanitarian aspects of the pandemic, it has been decided that India would licence paracetamol and HCQ in appropriate quantities to all her neighbouring countries who are dependent on India's capabilities.

- India's installed capacity of hydroxychloroquine active pharmaceutical ingredient: **40 tonnes**

- Capacity translates into **200 million** tablets (200 mg strength each) a year

- Domestic consumption is around **24 million** tablets a year (excess capacity, but need to factor in likely increase in domestic demand: IDMA)

- The country's overall pharmaceutical exports are worth **\$19 billion**



- Russia has delivered a planeload of medical supplies to the US as the New York healthcare system was overwhelmed due to a rapid rise in cases of the novel coronavirus.
- China too has been trying to use the crisis to its advantage by going on a PR offensive and using its production capacity to increase supplies of medical aid.
- It is being argued that India too could use this opportunity to up its pharma production.
- A conservative approach would give us the comfort of huge reserves of a limited relief drug, while an aggressive approach of rapid production and timely export could yield more positive results, diplomatically.
- The argument is being made that an outreach right now in the form of exports of HCQ could benefit India later on the form of access to an early vaccine, which could come from the US.

### Hydroxychloroquine:

- India had approved the use of the anti-malarial drug, hydroxychloroquine, as a preventive medication for people at high risk, such as health workers and immediate contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Chloroquine is basically an anti-malaria drug. It is a medication used to prevent and treat malaria in areas where malaria remains sensitive to chloroquine.
- Other uses include treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and porphyria cutanea tarda.
- Hydroxychloroquine is an interferon blocker, and works by diminishing the immune system's response to viral infections.
  - A hyperactive response by the immune system is said to be primarily responsible for pneumonia, also a fallout of a severe COVID-19 infection.
  - It needs to be noted that the drug is yet to be proven as a cure for the novel coronavirus.
- A study in France showed that Hydroxychloroquine alone or in combination with azithromycin appeared to reduce virus levels quicker prompting drug regulators in several countries including in India to approve the drug in restricted settings.

- The Indian Council for Medical Research has also cleared HCQ to be used as prophylaxis, or preventive medication, by doctors, nurses and other health staff.
- Hydroxychloroquine is known to have a variety of side-effects, and can in some cases harm the heart.
- These dosages are also linked to instances of cardiac arrhythmia and liver damage. Wide usage may handicap people's ability to fight the infection.

## C. GS 3 Related

### Category: SECURITY

#### 1. Hospitals warned of Cyberattacks

##### Context:

The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) has warned member countries that cybercriminals were attempting to target hospitals and institutions on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 with ransomware.

##### Issue:

Cybercriminals are using ransomware to hold hospitals and medical services digitally hostage, preventing them from accessing vital files and systems until a ransom is paid.

##### Details:

- In an alert sent to 194 nations, including India, Interpol said organisations at the forefront of the global response to the COVID-19 outbreak had also become targets of ransomware attacks, which were designed to lock them out of their critical systems in an attempt to extort payments.
- The agency's Cybercrime Threat Response Team had detected an increase in the number of attempted ransomware attacks against key organisations and infrastructure engaged in the virus response.
- Interpol also issued a 'Purple Notice'. It is issued to seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

##### Interpol Notices:

- INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.
- **Red Notice:** To seek the location/arrest of a person wanted by a judicial jurisdiction or an international tribunal with a view to his/her extradition.
- **Blue Notice:** To locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.
- **Green Notice:** To warn about a person's criminal activities if that person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.
- **Yellow Notice:** To locate a missing person or to identify a person unable to identify himself/herself.
- **Black Notice:** To seek information on unidentified bodies.
- **Orange Notice:** To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing an imminent threat and danger to persons or property.
- **Purple Notice:** To provide information on modus operandi, procedures, objects, devices, or hiding places used by criminals.

- **Interpol – UNSC Special Notice:** To inform Interpol's members that an individual or an entity is subject to UN sanctions.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. A different economic approach

##### Context:

- The article evaluates the **economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** and suggests correction in the present policy approaches to ensure a **balance between public health and economic health during the pandemic**.

##### Background:

- Given the **large population in India and the comparatively meagre healthcare resources**, India chose to go for an unprecedented 21-day national lockdown.
- This move has brought the economy to a near halt and would entail huge economic costs for India.
  - The lockdown will **reduce the gross value added (GVA)** during this period to near zero.
  - The **unorganized sector** accounts for more than 50% of the GVA and will **bear a disproportionate burden of the economic costs of the lockdown**. The suffering of the stranded migrant labourers is a strong indication of the higher burden shared by the unorganized sector.

##### Details:

##### Policy dilemma:

- There have been questions on whether the economic costs due to the lockdown are justified to save human lives. The core policy dilemma which needs to be addressed is **should public health matter more than economic health**.
- Given the fact that a prolonged lockdown will extract a huge economic cost, the economy cannot remain shut until a vaccine or drug becomes available.
- Therefore, the **policy objective must be to find ways of ensuring that the lockdown ends early without compromising on public health**. The author of the article discusses a few policy measures in this direction.

##### Aggressive testing and isolation:

- Combining large scale **testing for people and isolating the people tested positive** will make it unnecessary for the rest of the population to stay home and it will **allow the economy to restart without the risk of large scale spread of the disease**.
- However, for this strategy to work there are **certain preconditions** which must be satisfied.



- **People must be tested in large numbers.** Even after ending the lockdown, testing of randomly selected people must go on in large numbers.
- The success of this approach will also depend on eliminating the fears associated with isolation so that people obey strict quarantine. Such fears can be reduced only if isolation facilities are good.
- The strategy calls for **fully operational hospitals to be constructed** in every district of the country in a matter of weeks.
- This strategy will also require **huge funding from the governments.** Given the public health crisis, all resources must be used to ramp up healthcare capacities.

### Concerns:

- There have been some questions regarding India's economic policies for fighting COVID-19. There are concerns that apart from being mostly **ineffective** they might also be severely **hampering economic opportunities.**

### **Economic package and policy measures by RBI:**

- The government and RBI have taken several policy measures to reduce the economic impact of the lockdown.
- However, it should be noted that given the fact that lockdown is not a normal condition, the usual policy levers may not be effective in the current situation.
  - The loan moratoriums and cash transfers can help prevent bankruptcy and defaults for a few months and buy time on non-performing assets in banks. But they **cannot compensate for the GDP lost due to the economic shutdown.**
  - The liquidity and cash released by monetary and fiscal policies cannot get transmitted to the real sector during an economic shutdown.

### **Strict economic regulation:**

- Given the reports of overpricing of essentials due to the sudden spike in demand and fears of shortage in the domestic market, the state has put several restrictions in place.
  - Several essential items like masks, sanitizers have been placed **under price controls.**
  - Though testing has been opened up even for the private labs, there are caps on the pricing of the tests.
  - There have been restrictions **placed on export of medicines and medical equipment** to other countries.
- Such regulations, though well intended, have **removed the incentive for private players to ramp up their capacities.** This might only lead to lack of sufficient supply in the times of heightened demand.

### Way forward:

#### **Healthcare sector as the engine of economic growth:**

- A more effective approach for economic revival would be to **funnel money into the healthcare sector.** If the public health sector can be the economy's main engine for six months, the public health versus economic health trade-off can be resolved.
- This would entail several advantages.
  - In the short term, it would **help prepare for higher number of cases** of COVID-19. The spread of COVID-19 will slow down.
  - Given the fact that it is currently the only sector that is still active, funnelling more resources here would **help create jobs,** including for low-skilled construction labourers. This will help ensure that the economic pain of combating the virus will reduce.

- In the long term, if planned and executed smartly, this move can help **address the severe health infrastructure deficit in India.**

### Alternatives to economic regulation:

- Though some of the economic regulations currently in place like price caps, export restrictions are well intended; the government should also **consider alternatives.**
  - In case of testing, the **government should fully subsidize testing** instead of price capping which entail several advantages.
    - At low prices, more people with symptoms will come forward to get tested.
    - **Private labs will quickly ramp up their capacities** if they don't have to worry about losses due to price capping.
  - Similarly, planned and phased **removal of restrictions on export** of essential medicines and PPEs can be beneficial for India's interest.
    - Given the higher prices being offered by the foreign importers, there would be **incentives for the private sector enterprises** to ramp up their capacities. This will help cover up for the loss of exports due to the economic lockdown.
    - This would incentivize the entry of new players into the market. The increased manufacturing, apart from helping **meet the domestic demands**, will also help **create employment opportunities in India.**
    - **Private enterprise and technological innovations** will come up with innovation and improvements which augurs well for the Indian manufacturing sector.
    - It will help **earn goodwill for India in the international community.**

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Preparing for exit

#### Context:

- The article discusses the **strategies for the post lockdown phase.**

#### Background:

- India had imposed an aggressive lockdown for 21 days to contain the spread of the coronavirus.
- 284 districts have so far been affected by the COVID-19 in India.

#### Details:

- With only a week left for the end of the lockdown period, there is a need for planning for the post lockdown phase.
- The Prime Minister has sought the views of the States on the way forward beyond the 21-day lockdown, and mandated his ministers to come up with a set of priority actions.
- The government faces the **challenge of normalizing the economic activity without causing a surge in cases.**
- India must plan its strategy for a **calibrated exit from the national lockdown.**

#### Health policy:

#### Scaling up testing:

- China, South Korea and Singapore, who have been relatively successful in containing the spread of the pandemic, employed **enhanced testing, isolation of the infected, tracing of patient contacts and strict quarantine**. This will enable better targeting and **containment to specific areas**.
- The States must scale up testing.
- India should institute a system of testing that includes not just indicative cases but **surveillance samples** to determine the extent of spread.
- **Free and widely available testing**, and support systems for those infected, will encourage universal adoption.
- There should be **incentivization for the private sector** to ramp up their testing facilities with proper guidelines in place.

#### **Identifying clusters:**

- States should continue monitoring those under isolation or in quarantine. There are a few clusters of infection which have been identified and these should **receive increased focus from the state**.
- The identification of hotspots would enable strict control on the spread even if the nationwide curbs are relaxed.
- The latest ICMR advisory for clusters and migration centres suggests increased testing.
- The state should **ensure availability of food, other essentials and medicines** in such hotspots to ensure strict adherence to lockdowns.

#### **Continued emphasis on social distancing:**

- The emphasis on social distancing, **universal mask use and hand washing** should continue.
- **Mass gatherings, long-distance travel and leisure activity should be curbed**.
- **Work from home facilities** for urban workers could continue wherever viable.
- **Urban mobility for workers** in the absence of public transport should be planned for.

#### **Economic policy:**

- There is a need for priority actions to **ensure business continuity**.
- The strategy will have to take into account the exodus of migrant labour from cities to their home towns or to camps set up along inter-State corridors. The lack of migrant labourers might impact agricultural production triggering food deficits and high prices.

### **Category: ETHICS**

#### **1. Ten questions posed by the virus**

##### **Context:**

- The article discusses the possible **impact of the pandemic on some basic principles which have defined humankind** in the recent past.

##### **Details:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic is reopening several questions that were considered resolved by the end of the last century.
- Human beings' life after the pandemic will be defined by questions on the prevailing organizing principles of humankind.



### Utilitarian question:

- The pandemic has resurrected the **classic utilitarian question**. The debate over the importance of **economic health over public health** is an indication of the utilitarian approach.
  - Utilitarianism is a family of **consequentialist ethical theories** that promotes actions that maximize happiness and well-being for the affected individuals.
- Accepting the death of a few for the revival of economic activity is a recurring theme in the western countries, given the large unemployment created due to the restrictions and lockdowns in place.
- COVID-19 has been more fatal for the aged population and also people with health conditions. In some countries, the acceptance of their death is based on the principle of **social Darwinism** which propounds the survival of the fittest principle.

### National priorities:

- Though **the U.S. is the pre-eminent military and economic superpower, it remains the most affected country in the world** and continues to struggle in its fight against the pandemic.
- The present crisis might push the countries to recognize the **need for enhanced attention on social infrastructure apart from the emphasis on security and weaponry**.
- There could be a new understanding of power and security.

### Globalization:

- **All countries have tried to enforce border controls to stop the virus**. There has been very **limited cooperation** among the countries given the fact that most of them are concentrating on catering to the domestic needs.
- However, global cooperation and multinational governance continue to remain very important in the fight against the Pandemic. The supply of necessary equipment and products from the recovering countries can help control the situation in the affected countries.
- There is a **need for a new globalization where humanity takes precedence over economic benefits**.

### Political system:

- China and Singapore showed that authoritarian measures worked well in limiting the spread of the pandemic. Germany showed that democratic and inclusive methods work too.
- Italy and the U.S. showed that individualism and markets can impede collective goals.
- There are questions regarding **whether democratic or authoritarian systems would find increasing acceptance**.

### Market economy:

- **The last few decades have witnessed an increasing role for market economy** and decreasing role for the public sector in the economy. This was based on the assumption that a market economy improves efficiency and brings progress.
- However, the **pandemic has resulted in many reverses**. There has been the nationalization of all hospitals in Spain and there is the increasing call for nationalization of companies to meet the public health demands.
- The **uneven impact of the restriction on the rich and poor also pose questions to the negative impact of the market economy**.
- The pandemic might indicate the risk involved in the competition principle of market economy and may emphasize the **need for collectivization and cooperation**.

### Idea of community:

- **Neoliberalism had made all human interactions transactional.**
- The COVID-19 crisis has **urged humans for community action.**
- The **idea of community and national priorities would have to change.** A sustainable organizing principle of humanity will require a conception of self-interest that is not immediate in terms of time or geography, rather should **work for the interest of all humanity not just for the present but also future generations.**

## F. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Tidbits

### 1. Delhi's '5T' war against virus

- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has announced a "5T plan" created by his government to contain the COVID-19 spread in Delhi.
- These five Ts are testing, tracing, treatment, teamwork and tracking-monitoring.
- Like South Korea, Delhi will resort to testing on a large scale.

### 2. WhatsApp puts strict limit on forwards

#### What's in News?

- To slow the spread of misinformation via its platform, WhatsApp has announced a new stricter limit on forwarding messages.
- Now, frequently forwarded messages — those which have been previously forwarded five times or more, can only be forwarded to one chat at a time.

#### Details:

- There has been a significant increase in the amount of forwarding which could contribute to the spread of misinformation.
- The new development comes in a bid to slow the spread of these messages to keep WhatsApp a place for personal conversation.
- WhatsApp said that its previous move to place limits led to a 25% decrease in message forwards globally at the time.
  - The company had, in 2018, started testing the forwarding limit of five chats at once in India, where people forward more messages, photos, and videos than any other country in the world.
  - The limit was later introduced around the world in 2019.
- The company had also started labelling messages that have been forwarded many times with double arrows to indicate they did not originate from a close contact.

### 3. RBI eases overdraft rules for States

- In order to provide greater flexibility to the State governments to tide over their cash flow mismatches due to the lockdown, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to increase the number of days for which a State or a union territory can be in overdraft continuously to 21 working days from the current stipulation of 14 working days.
- The RBI has also increased the number of days for which a State/UT can be in overdraft in a quarter to 50 working days from the current stipulation of 36 working days.
- This arrangement will come into force with immediate effect and will remain valid till September 30, 2020.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Interpol:

1. Interpol is global police co-operation agency and a non-governmental organization (NGO).
2. It is headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland.
3. Interpol Purple Notice is issued to locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. 1 only

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Interpol is global police co-operation agency and a non-governmental organization (NGO). It was established as the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) in 1923. Its headquarters is located at Lyon, France. Interpol Purple Notice is issued to provide information on modus operandi, procedures, objects, devices, or hiding places used by criminals.

Q2. Which of these South Indian state/s share boundaries with the maximum number of states?

- a. Karnataka only
- b. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka
- c. Karnataka and Telangana
- d. Andhra Pradesh only

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Karnataka shares its boundary with 6 states: Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Andhra Pradesh shares its boundary with 5 states: Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu.
- Telangana shares its boundary with 4 states: Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh.



**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) is a public platform started by India in 2008.
2. It is headquartered in New Delhi, India.

Which of the given statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) is a public platform started by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2008 for countries to share genome sequences. The GISAID platform was launched on the occasion of the Sixty-first World Health Assembly in May 2008. Since its launch GISAID plays an essential role in the sharing of data among the WHO Collaborating Centers and National Influenza Centers for the bi-annual influenza vaccine virus recommendations by the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS). It is headquartered in Munich, Germany.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Gaganyaan is an Indian human space flight programme.
2. GSLV Mk III will be used to launch Gaganyaan.
3. India has its own Cryogenic engine technology.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Gaganyaan is an Indian human space flight programme under which Indian astronauts will go into space. GSLV Mk III, also called the LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3) the three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle, will be used to launch Gaganyaan. GSLV MK-III placed the country's heaviest satellite till date, GSAT-19, into a precise orbit. With it, India became a nation having its own indigenous cryogenic engine technology.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Given the need to protect economic health while balancing public health needs in the fight against the pandemic, discuss the limitations of the present policies being adopted and suggest suitable measures and policy changes. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. The COVID-19 pandemic is reopening several questions that were considered settled by the end of the last century. This involves questions over the prevailing organizing principles of humankind in the social, political and economic spheres. Analyze. (15 marks, 250 words)