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Masks and Hand Sanitizers Under EC Act, 1955

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Why in News

Recently, the central government has notified that **masks (2 ply and 3 ply surgical masks, N95 masks) and hand sanitizers as essential commodities** up to June 30, 2020, under the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (EC Act)**.

- The invocation of the EC Act aims to ensure that these products, key for preventing the spread of Covid-19 infection, are available to people at the **right price and of the right quality**.
- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has also issued an advisory under the **Legal Metrology Act, 2009 to ensure these items are not sold for more than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP)**.

NOTE:

- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** This Act intends to provide, in the interest of the general public, for the control of the production, supply and distribution of, and trade and commerce, in certain commodities.
- **The Legal Metrology Act, 2009:** It aims to establish and enforce standards of weights and measures, regulate trade and commerce in weights, measures and other goods which are sold or distributed by weight, measure or number and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- Both the mentioned Acts are **regulated and administered** by the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.

Key Points

- Under the EC Act, the States and Union Territories **can ensure that manufacturers enhance their production capacity so that masks and hand sanitizers are widely available to consumers.**
 - The invocation of EC Act has empowered the Centre as well as states to regulate the production, quality, distributions of masks and hand sanitizers.
 - It will also help to smoothen the sale and availability of the above items and carry out operations against speculators.
- The Consumer Affairs Ministry has also invoked the **Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980** which would carry out action against those involved in overpricing and black marketing of the products.

Source: TH