

## **2. Centre withdraws ex-gratia notification on COVID-19**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Governance – Health

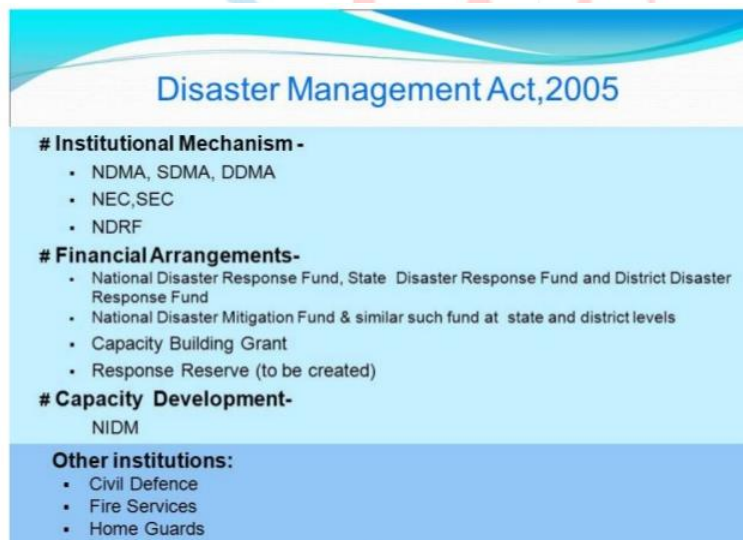
**Mains Syllabus:** GS-II Issues relating to Development and Management of Social Sector or Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### **Why in News?**

- Hours after it issued a notification that an ex-gratia of ₹4 lakhs will be paid to the families of those who die of COVID-19 infection, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) withdrew the order.

### **Highlights:**

- In an order recently, the MHA said it has decided to treat COVID-19 as a “notified disaster” for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).
- Under the old notification, the MHA listed ex-gratia relief to families of deceased persons and cost of hospitalization for managing COVID-19 patients at rates fixed by the State government among the items for assistance from the SDRF pool.
- It issued another “partially modified” notification the same day where the above two items were removed.

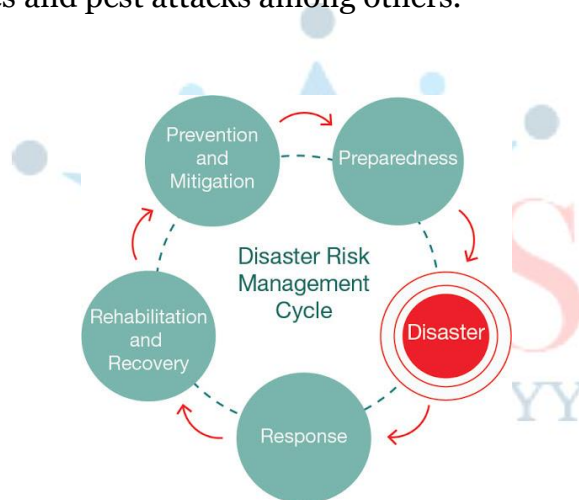


- It said the items that would be included for assistance under the SDRF are measures for quarantine, sample collection, screening and procurement of essential equipment/laboratories in response to COVID-19.
- Relief to families of victims and cost of hospitalization removed in new order.
- No explanation was given by the MHA officials for the modified notification.

### State Disaster Response Fund:

- The SDRF is constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and is the primary fund available with state governments for responses to notified disasters.
- The Central government contributes 75 % towards the SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs, and over 90 % for special category states/UTs, which includes north-eastern states, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand).
- For SDRF, the Centre releases funds in two equal instalments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
- On the other hand, the National Disaster Response Fund, which is also constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 supplements the SDRF of a state, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.
- The disasters covered under the SDRF include cyclones, droughts, tsunamis, hailstorms, landslides, avalanches and pest attacks among others.

### What is a Disaster?



- According to the Disaster Management Act, a disaster is a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.
- Ministry of Home Affairs has defined a disaster as an “extreme disruption of the functioning of a society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources.”

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- Further, the High Power Committee on Disaster Management, which was constituted in 1999, identified 31 disaster categories organised into five major sub-groups, which are: water and climate related disasters, geological related disasters, chemical, industrial and nuclear related disasters and biological related disasters, which includes biological disasters and epidemics.

