Curbing Delivery of Non-essentials

Why in News?

Centre has reversed its decision to resume delivery of 'non-essentials' by e-commerce companies.

What does this decision mean?

- This decision is welcome, given that India is still not out of the woods in its pandemic fight.
- The previous decision by the Centre to allow the delivery was taken as a part of easing of the lockdown curbs from April 20.
- Doorstep delivery of products purchased online by an e-commerce firm minimises human interaction to a negligible level.
- But the lockdown is aimed at restricting movement to the barest minimum in order to break the chain of transmission.
- This necessitates limiting the exemptions.

Why non-essentials, in particular, should be limited?

- Non-essential items like books, electronics, etc constitute the bulk of the listings on e-commerce sites.
- Every additional product category would involve that many more people getting activated along the supply chain.
- These people may be from a producer or supplier to the transport operators and additional delivery persons.

How should some sectors be permitted?

- There are immense economic costs associated with the shutdown especially to individual livelihoods.
- It would be reasonable to reopen some sectors and jobs with **stringent safeguards** mandated.
- However, they should be **permitted in a phased manner**.
- This was the underlying rationale behind the Centre's April 15 missive.
- Among the sectors that can resume are agricultural and horticultural activities, banking, cargo transportation, construction, etc.
- Self-employed tradesmen such as electricians, plumbers and carpenters have been allowed to resume work.

What could be the priority?

- As the lockdown extends to over a month, what might have been non-essential initially might turn essential later.
- For instance, a ‘non-essential’ laptop is essential for a person working from home or attending online classes.
- The very definition of what ought to be deemed essential is lost here.
- Still, protecting lives must be the ultimate priority over allowing commercial activity.

Source: The Hindu

