

**COVID- 19 NEWS****Covid-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan**

The United Nations and partner agencies have launched a 6.7 billion US dollar global appeal to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, more than trebling an earlier appeal made by the UN chief.

**About:**

- The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan was launched on March 25th, but with humanitarian needs rising, the plan is calling for an injection of 6.7 billion US dollars for the remainder of 2020.
- The plan puts special focus on more vulnerable countries and combating food insecurity and gender-based violence.
- The updated appeal adds nine vulnerable countries to the 54 nations covered in the initial appeal -- Benin, Djibouti, Liberia, Mozambique, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zimbabwe.

**Stringency Index**

A Stringency Index created by Oxford University shows how strict a country's measures were responding to the Covid-19 outbreak, and at what stage of the spread it enforced these.

**About:**

- It is among the metrics being used by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker.
- It tracks 17 indicators of government response. These indicators examine containment policies such as school and workplace closings, public events, public transport, stay-at-home policies.
- The Stringency Index is a number from 0 to 100 that reflects these indicators. A higher index score indicates a higher level of stringency.

**Key findings on India:**

- The Stringency Index has found that India indeed had one of the strongest lockdown measures in the world — at a 100 score since March 22.
- It was relaxed slightly on April 20 after the government eased norms for certain workplaces in regions outside the red zones.
- In countries such as the UK, the US, and India, the Oxford graphs find that the death curve has not flattened after strictest measures were enforced.

**GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC****Kailash – Mansarovar Yatra Link Road**

Defence Minister inaugurated the Link Road to Kailash Mansarovar via video conferencing. This link road was constructed by Border Roads Organization (BRO).

**About:**

- The link road connects Dharchula to Lipulekh (China Border) which is known as Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra Route.
- The Darchula – Lipulekh road is an extension of Pithoragarh-Tawaghat-Ghatiabagarh road.
- It originates from Ghatiabagarh and terminates at Lipulekh Pass, the gateway to Kailash Mansarovar. In this 80 Km road, the altitude rises from 6000 feet to 17,060 feet.
- At present, the travel to Kailash Mansarovar takes around two to three weeks through Sikkim or Nepal routes. Lipulekh route had a trek of 90 Km through high altitude terrain and the elderly yatriis faced lot of difficulties. Now, this yatra will get completed by vehicles.

**Mount Kailash**

- Mount Kailash is a 6,638 m high peak in the Kailash Range (Gangdise Mountains), which forms part of the Transhimalaya in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

- The mountain is located near Lake Manasarovar and Lake Rakshastal, close to the source of some of the longest Asian rivers: the Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra, and Karnali/Ghaghara.

### **GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**

#### **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF) Scheme**

Union HRD Ministry has recently carried out various amendments in Prime Minister's Research Fellowship Scheme to boost research in the country.

#### **Key Amendments:**

- To boost research, a dedicated Division is being created in the ministry with the name of "Research and Innovation Division". This division will be headed by a director who will be coordinating research work of various institutions coming under MHRD.
- Now for the students from any recognised institute/ university (other than IISc/ IITs/NITs/IISERs/IEST/CF IITs), the requirement of GATE Score is reduced to 650 from 750 apart from minimum CGPA of 8 or equivalent.
- Starting Academic Year 2020-21, there will be two channels of entries, one direct entry and lateral entry. In lateral entry, the students, who are pursuing PhD in PMRF granting institutions can also apply to become fellow under the scheme as per new guidelines.

#### **Background:**

- The Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme has been designed for improving the quality of research in various higher educational institutions in the country. With attractive fellowships, the scheme seeks to attract the best talent into research.
- The scheme was announced in the Budget 2018-19.
- The institutes which can offer PMRF include all the IITs, all the IISERs, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and some of the top Central Universities/NITs that offer science and/or technology degrees.

### **ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

#### **Safeguards Against Chemical Disasters In India**

A gas leak from LG Polymers factory situated on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh killed at least 11 people. The law in India provides protection to victims of such chemical disasters.

#### **Important provisions:**

- Bhopal Gas Leak (Processing of Claims) Act, 1985 gives powers to the central government to secure the claims arising out of or connected with the Bhopal gas tragedy.
- The Environment Protection Act, 1986 gives powers to the central government to undertake measures for improving the environment and set standards and inspect industrial units.
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 is an insurance meant to provide relief to persons affected by accidents that occur while handling hazardous substances.
- Under the National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997, the National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA) can hear appeals regarding the restriction of areas in which any industries shall not be carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- National Green Tribunal, 2010, provides for the establishment of a National Green Tribunal for expeditious disposal of cases related to environmental protection and conservation of forests.

**ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES****World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)**

This year the theme of World Migratory Bird Day is “Birds Connect Our World” to highlight the importance of conserving the ecological connectivity that support the natural movements of migratory birds.

**About:**

- WMBD is an annual awareness-raising campaign highlighting the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats.
- History: The annual day was initiated in 2006.
- Day of Observance: Since 2018, it is celebrated twice a year, on the second Saturday in May and in October.
- The campaign is organized by two international wildlife treaties administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) - together with Environment for the Americas (EFTA).

**Tiger Population In Sunderbans**

According to the latest estimation of tiger numbers in the Indian Sunderbans by the West Bengal Forest Department, the tiger count for the year 2019-20 rose to 96, from 88 in 2018-19.

**About:**

- The Sunderbans delta, spread over India and Bangladesh, is the only mangrove forest in the world inhabited by tigers.
- The increase in the number by eight was significant as it was the biggest annual jump reported from the Sunderbans.
- The Sunderban mangrove forest is spread over 2,585 sq. km and includes the Sundarban Tiger Reserve and the 24 Parganas (South) Division.
- Estimation of the number of tigers in the Sunderbans, a world heritage as well as a Ramsar site, has always been a challenge because of the difficult terrain that comprises dense mangrove forests, with creeks and rivulets, and floods twice a day during the high tides.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC****Institute Of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS)**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) designed and produced by Indian Navy has been tested by INMAS and is certified to be mass produced and used in clinical COVID situations. INMAS is a DRDO organization tasked with testing and certification of PPE.

**About:**

- Parent Body: INMAS is a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Established in: 1961.
- Location: New Delhi.
- Mandate:
  - This multidisciplinary laboratory is engaged in R&D activities in the field of Radiation, Imaging Sciences, CBRN technologies, Nuclear medicine research and responding to nuclear accidents and explosions.
  - Since 1960s it offers a two-year diploma in radiation medicine, making it the first formal training program in nuclear medicine in the world.
  - A major development in the recent past has been the establishment of NMR, PET-Cyclotron facility that has contributed towards development of technologies for

enhancing combat efficiency besides providing clinical research to the Armed forces.

### **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Discuss India's position in getting closer to permanent membership of UNSC.**

**Answer :**

United Nation Security Council (UNSC) has primary responsibility, under the United Nations Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the UNSC has been criticised due to its undemocratic nature, misuse of veto powers, etc.

Thus, there is global consensus for UNSC reforms. In light of this, India too advocates for UNSC reforms and a place as a permanent member of UNSC.

Reasons for India to be granted permanent membership in UNSC:

- India is the largest democracy, second-most populous country and 5th largest economy in the world.
- India acquired the status of a Nuclear Weapons State in May 1998, which brought it to the equal footing of the existing permanent members of UNSC.
- India is the undisputed leader of the third world countries, as reflected by its leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement and G-77 grouping.
- Historically, India has been the founding member of the UN and has been elected for seven terms for a two-year non-permanent member seat.
- India contributes one of the largest military personnels in UN peace-keeping forces.
- India's candidature is supported by 4 out of 5 permanent members, G4 grouping, and the majority of UNGA countries.
- Recently, India has taken a proactive role in regional and global politics. For example, Quad initiative, SAGAR vision, International Solar Alliance etc.

RoadBlocks in India's Path

- India being the non-signatory to NPT and CTBT, is cited as the reason by the countries opposing India's candidature.
- China is the only permanent member of UNSC, opposing India's inclusion into UNSC. Thus, uses veto power against India's efforts to become a permanent member.
- India is yet to prove its military prowess beyond the Indian Ocean region.
- India heavily relies on weaponry imports from the US and Russia for its military requirements.
- Poor performance in many socio-economic indicators like the Human Development Index diminishes India's claim to leadership.

Conclusion

- India's international profile and capabilities make it a natural claimant to become a permanent member in UNSC. However, in order to have a more legitimate claim, India must address its socio-economic indicators and dependency on military imports.