

Q2) What are the various policy actions that are needed to handle the plastic and bio-medical waste generated during the COVID crisis? Explain 23-7-2020

Answer: According to "World Health Organisation", high-income countries produce up to 0.5 kg of hazardous waste per hospital bed per day. But this material - which may be infectious, toxic or radioactive - only accounts for around 15% of waste produced by healthcare activities. The remaining 85% is comparable to domestic waste.

In current situation of COVID-19 pandemic, the production of bio medical waste generated immensely and rampant use of plastic is there. Hence there is a need to tackle with these waste sustainably & make environment clean & safe to survive.

① Hospitals use many products, particularly every day plastic items like packaging, which are not currently biodegradable. And there are non-disposable items like steel bed pans that are currently cleaned and reused. These could be replaced with single-use, bioplastic, biodegradable versions.

② "15th Finance Commission" must look (review) at provision of funds for urban local bodies

- ③ Centre can incentivise start-ups and SMEs offering solutions for Covid refuse segregation and treatment under "Innovation Challenge Platform" launched by "MeitY".
- ④ Besides the global expertise, there are cues to be taken from local initiatives such as the Covid Biomedical waste treatment plant in Kerala's Palakkad.
- ⑤ India must adopt a system that generates energy from burning plastic with effective segregation (as UK, Japan, China adopted).
- ⑥ It must set up recyclic plants across the country (envisaged under the Small cities project) under PPP model. States such as Kerala, Delhi have some ~~plans~~ plans for urban waste management. With Central Pollution Control Board, big cities have to follow the guidelines about biomedical waste generated in the wake of Covid-19.
- ⑦ Encourage the SMEs to generate cotton masks instead of fibre & make prevalent in public.
- ⑧ While ban on single use plastic from 2016 in some states of India, need more focus to follow this guidelines.
- ⑨ A coordination is necessary with Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, State

Government and Centre for ensuring the Plastic Producers taking full responsibility for recycling what they have produced.

The Centre needs to stitch together a national protocol that combines the Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016, with the recently released Environment Ministry guidelines on "extended Producer responsibility (EPR)" for Producers of Plastic.