

## **1. An Effective Plan to end the use of Plastic**

### **Why in News?**

- ▶▶ Single-use plastic items including plastic bags, spoons, cups, straws and bottles will be banned with effect from October 2, 2019, on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary.

### **What is Single-Use Plastic?**

- ▶▶ Single-use plastic is a form of plastic that is disposable, which is only used once and then has to be thrown away or recycled.
- ▶▶ **Single-use Plastic Items:** The single-use plastic items include plastic bags, water bottles, soda bottles, straws, plastic plates, cups, most food packaging and coffee stirrers.

### **Why Single-use plastic is Harmful?**

- ▶▶ **India generates about 9.4 million tonnes of plastic waste** each year and with no effective disposal method, the plastic waste ends up the roadsides, in landfills and water bodies. Plastic waste management is a global concern. Globally, around 90 percent of the plastic produced is discarded as waste. So far, more than 60 countries have banned single-use plastic or curbed its use.
- ▶▶ **As only 1-13 percent of the plastic items are recyclable**, the rest ends up either buried in the land or water bodies, eventually reaching the oceans, leading to polluting of water bodies and killing of marine life. Plastic is oil-derived material is not bio-degradable, careless disposal pollutes the environment in irredeemable ways. Apart from the urban crisis of choked drains and garbage heaps, which can't be incinerated, we have several species at threat of polymer ingestion.
- ▶▶ **Marine life, in particular, has been suffering since much plastic waste ends up in the sea and in the bellies of Aquatic Creatures.**
- ▶▶ Micro-particles are increasingly being detected in fish, which puts people at risk of contaminant-caused illnesses.

### **Plastic Waste Management Rules – 2016:**

#### **1. Increase in the thickness of carry bags and Plastic Sheets:**

- ▶▶ Increasing the thickness of plastic carry bags from 40 to 50 micron and stipulation of 50 micron thickness for plastic sheets is likely to increase the cost by about 20 %.
- ▶▶ Hence, the tendency to provide free carry bags will come down and collection by the waste-pickers also increase to some extent.

## **2. Collect Back System:**

- ▶▶ The producers, importers and brand owners who introduce the plastic carry bags, multi-layered plastic sachet, or pouches, or packaging establish a system for collecting back the plastic waste generated due to their products.
- ▶▶ They shall work out modalities for waste collection system based on Extended Producers Responsibility

## **3. Phasing out of manufacture and use of non- recyclable multilayered plastic**

### **4. Responsibility of Waste Generator**

- ▶▶ All waste generators shall pay such user fee, or charge, as may be specified in the bye-laws of the local bodies for plastic waste management, such as waste collection, or operation of the facility thereof, etc.

### **5. Responsibility of local bodies and Gram Panchayat:**

- ▶▶ The local bodies shall be responsible for setting up, operationalisation and co-ordination of the waste management system and for performing associated functions.

## **Government Measures:**

- ▶▶ The government, through its Swachhata Hi Seva campaign launched last month, plans to acquaint Indians with the perils of plastic and ask people to voluntarily reduce its use.
- ▶▶ In addition, it reportedly intends to ask all states to enforce existing rules against the storage, manufacture and use of some single-use products, such as polythene bags.

## **Challenges Ahead:**

- ▶▶ While users of some flexible items such as carry bags can easily switch to slightly more expensive material, as many already have, those of hard-plastic products, such as disposable syringes, would have found an overnight switch-over difficult to achieve.
- ▶▶ Lack of adequate infrastructure for segregation and collection is the key reason for inefficient plastic waste disposal. Small producers of plastics are facing the ban, while more organised entities covered by the Extended Producer Responsibility clause continue with business as usual.
- ▶▶ **The PWM Rules Amendment, 2018**, omitted explicit pricing of plastic bags that had been a feature of the 2016 Rules.

## **Way Forward:**

- ▶▶ For any action plan against plastic pollution to be effective, efforts should first be directed at waste disposal mechanisms.

- ▶▶ Separation-at-source garbage collection has seen only patchy success in India, and plastic items rarely have separate channels for recycling.
- ▶▶ **Moral suasion could change attitudes here.** Perhaps a nudge of some sort could also work, say, with express trash clearance assured to those who put anything “poly” in marked-out bins.
- ▶▶ As for institutional and corporate reduction of plastic use, a broad incentive scheme in **favour of alternative material could be put in place.**
- ▶▶ **The aim should be to defray the financial cost of switching to eco-friendly material.** Then there are also various manufacturers who are likely to suffer if the material’s consumption were to drop.
- ▶▶ They need sufficient time to revise their business plans and move on to other opportunities. As demand begins to decline, a timeline could be declared for the elimination of some categories of plastic use.

