Going Forward with Plastic Ban

What is the issue?

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- India won global acclaim for its “Beat Plastic Pollution” resolve declared on World Environment Day in 2018.
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- But going forward, a plan is needed for plastic waste in packaging and manufacturing.
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What is the “Beat Plastic Pollution” resolve?

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- “Beat Plastic Pollution” is the theme for World Environment Day, 2018.
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- It is a call to action for all to come together to combat one of the great environmental challenges of the time.
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- The theme calls for making changes in everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution.
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- Under the “Beat Plastic Pollution” resolve, India pledged to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022.
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What are the developments in this regard?

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- So far, 22 States and Union Territories have joined the fight, announcing a ban on single-use plastics including carry bags, cups, plates, cutlery, straws and thermocol products.
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- In states where firm action has been taken, positive results have followed.
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- In Bengaluru, the volume of plastic waste being collected has dropped from about 2 tonnes a day to less than 100 kg.
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- Voluntary initiatives are having an impact in many States, as citizens reduce, reuse and sort their waste.
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What are the drawbacks and measures needed?

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- **Packaging** - Plastics play a major role in several industries, notably in the automotive, pharmaceutical, health care and construction sectors.
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- But it is the fast moving consumer goods sector that uses large volumes of packaging, posing a higher order challenge.
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- Waste plastic from packaging of everything from food, cosmetics and groceries to goods delivered by online platforms remains unaddressed.
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- A paradigm shift in the manner in which waste is collected and handled by municipal authorities is essential to change this.
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- Governments must start charging the producers for their waste, which will lead to recovery and recycling.
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- **Waste management** - Plastic Waste Management Rules specifies that producers, importers and brand owners must adopt a collect-back system for the plastic they introduce into the environment.
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- Although the rules were notified, not much has been done to take the process forward.
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- State and local governments are unwilling to upgrade their waste management systems.
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- Working on the system is crucial to even measure the true scale of packaging waste.
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- **Anomaly** - Small producers of plastics face the ban, but more organised entities covered by the Extended Producer Responsibility clause continue

with business as usual.
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- At the very least, local bodies should consult manufacturers or importers to assess the problem.
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- Cities and towns need competent municipal systems to achieve this.
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- All these call for urgent government action and the same resolve here as in imposing the ban.
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Source: The Hindu

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