Measures to combat Plastic Pollution

What is the issue?

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- The pollution caused by the single use plastics are affecting the environment.
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- Therefore steps must be taken to reduce their use and explore sustainable alternatives.
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What is the present scenario of plastics?

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- Plastics are organic polymers of high molecular mass and are usually synthetic, mainly derived from petrochemicals.
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- Due to their low cost, ease of manufacture, versatility, non-corrosiveness and imperviousness to water, plastics are used for multiple purposes at different scales.
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- Presently, over one million plastic bags and one million plastic bottles are used every minute worldwide.
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- About 50% of the plastics used are single use (disposable) which constitute 10% of the total waste generated.
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- And of the 7 billion tons of plastic waste generated, only 9% was recycled, 12% incinerated, and 79% accumulated in landfills or the environment.
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What is the impact of plastics on environment?

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- The plastics, mostly single use plastics are carried down the rivers to the oceans and this accounts for two thirds of the plastic waste present in the oceans.
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- This affects the marine ecosystem as fishes are killed when they swallow plastic particles.
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- Also the economic impact due to plastic pollution is high especially in fisheries and tourism sector.
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- Another direct impact of plastic pollution is on the land, as it degrades slowly and leaches chemicals into surroundings and groundwater.
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- Drinking water samples in different parts of the world including India reveal presence of up to 83% micro plastic concentrations.
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What measures can be taken to reduce plastic pollution?

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- Plastic use cannot be entirely eliminated from day to day activities, but safe disposal, reuse and reducing the quantity can be done.
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- Policies should be made to restrict plastic production and encourage recycling.
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- Since plastics are used by the common man, a behavioural change is necessary and segregation of household waste must be made mandatory.
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- Awareness has to be created on the dangers of plastics hazards and to opt for sustainable and biodegradable products.
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- Incentives for developing eco-friendly substitutes (cloth/paper/jute bags, leaves/areca leaf plates, paper straws), scientific as well as financial support must be provided.
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Source: The Hindu

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