Plastic waste management – A responsibility

Why in News?

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled up 52 companies for not specifying a timeline or plan to collect the plastic waste that they generate.

What is the current situation?

- The companies that have been pulled up include Amazon, Flipkart, Patanjali Ayurved Limited, etc.,
- CPCB has warned these companies, stating that they hadn't yet registered at the online portal and disclosed their disposal plans.

What is the basis for these actions?

- These companies are pulled up because they haven't followed the norms under the,
    1. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (amended in 2018)
    2. Environment Protection Act, 1986
- The CPCB also stated that failing to do so would invite action against the defaulters which may include fines or imprisonment.

What does the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 aim to?

- **Increase minimum thickness** of plastic carry bags and sheets from 40 to 50 microns.
- **Expand the jurisdiction of applicability** from the municipal area to rural areas.
- **Extended producers' responsibility -** To bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators, both in plastic waste management system and to introduce collect back system of plastic waste by the producers/brand owners.
- **Collection of plastic waste management fee** through pre-registration of the producers, importers of plastic carry bags/multi layered packaging and vendors selling the same.
- **Gainful utilization of waste** - By promoting use of plastic waste for road construction or energy recovery, or waste to oil etc.
- **Responsibility on waste generators** - To pay user charge as prescribed by local authority, collection and handing over of waste by the institutional

generator, event organizers.
- **Responsibility of local bodies and Gram Panchayat -** To set up, operationalise and co-ordinate the waste management system.
- **Responsibility of retailers and street vendors -** To not sell, or provide commodities to consumers in carry bags, or plastic sheet, or multi layered packaging.

What can be done?

- The solutions can be **packaging innovation** and **upscaling waste segregation**, collection and transmission.
- **Recovering materials** from garbage should be a high priority, considering that India is the third highest consumer of materials.
- **Recycling** plastics extends their life and provides a substitute for virgin material. But recyclable waste is shouldn't be mixed with other articles.
- **Making** municipal and pollution control **authorities accountable** is also equally important.

What can online retailers do?

- Online retailers have not felt compelled to take back the plastic articles inside cardboard boxes.
- These companies can **form waste cooperatives** in India, employing informal waste-pickers.
- In such a model, consumers will respond readily if they are incentivised to return segregated plastic waste.

Source: The Hindu

Quick Facts

Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

- It was enacted in 1986 with the main objective to provide the **protection and improvement of environment** and for matters connected therewith.
- **Objectives** of the act are,
    1. To implement the decisions of UN Conference on Human Environment held at Stockholm, 1972.
    2. To enact a general law on the areas of environmental protection which were left uncovered by existing laws.
    3. To co-ordinate activities of the various regulatory agencies under the

existing laws.

4. To provide for the creation of an authority or authorities for environmental protection.
5. To provide a deterrent punishment to those who endanger human environment, safety and health.

