Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021

Why in news?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, prohibiting identified single use plastic (SUP) items by 2022.

What are single-use plastics?

- They are plastics that are used just once, as in disposable packaging and products.
- They are made primarily from fossil fuel–based chemicals (petrochemicals) and are meant to be disposed of right after use (in minutes).
- They are most commonly used for packaging and serviceware

What is the impact:?

- Low utility but high littering potential.
- Large and growing volume adds enormously to the total plastic waste.
- Adverse impacts on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

What are the concerns:in India?

- 22 States have, in the past, announced a ban on SUP, but waste choking wetlands and waterways (and being transported to the oceans to turn into microplastic)still continue.
- Lack of proper waste segregation leading to difficulties in recycling:-34 lakh tonnes of plastic waste generated in 2019-20 in India; only about 60% is recycled.
- Nearly 43% of India's plastics are used in packaging and much of it is SUP.

What are the key provisions in the Amendment Rules?

- **Prohibition** of manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of SUP, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene, commodities from the 1st July, 2022. This covers –
    1. ear buds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene [Thermocol] for decoration
    2. plates, cups, glasses, cutlery, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes
    3. invitation cards, cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers
- **Thickness** of plastic carry bags to be increased from 50 microns –
    1. to 75 microns from 30th September, 2021
    2. to 120 microns from the 31st December, 2022
- This is to stop littering due to lightweight plastic carry bags, and allow their reuse.
- **Guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility/EPR**(as per Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016) has been given legal force through the 2021 Rules, for effective implementation.
- EPR - Environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle.
- Accordingly, collection and management of plastic packaging waste, which is not covered

under the phase-out of identified SUP items, through the EPR of the Producer, Importer and Brand owner (PIBO).

- **Other measures** for elimination of single use plastics and effective implementation of Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:

    1. A Special Task Force by States/UTs
    2. National Level Taskforce by the Union MoEFCCfor taking coordinated efforts
    3. Strengthening of waste management infrastructure in the States/UTs through the Swachh Bharat Mission.
    4. Comprehensive action plans by State/UT Governments and concerned Central Ministries/Departments
    5. Establishment of institutional mechanism in all States/UTs as per direction issued under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
    6. Awareness generation
    7. India Plastic Challenge-Hackathon 2021for Higher Educational Institutions' students and Startups for developing alternatives to identified SUP items and digital solutions to plastic waste management.

- Notably, in the 4th UN Environment Assembly held in 2019, India had piloted a resolution on addressing single-use plastic products pollution.

Source: PIB, The Hindu

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