Single Use Plastic

Why in news?

The Single Use Plastic (SUP) plastic ban in India addresses roughly 11% of the entire gamut of single-use plastic waste.

Status of SUP in India
• According to the report Plastic Waste Makers Index 2019, India was the *13th largest investor* in SUP polymer production globally. • Plastic Waste Makers Index notes that India's Reliance Industries producing 3 million tonne of SUP waste stood 8th in the list of companies producing polymers. • India ranked 3rd globally, contributing 5.5 million tonnes of SUP waste, and ranked 94th with per capita single-use plastic waste of 4 kg per year. • UN Environment Program's country wise plastic data revealed that *India mismanages 85% of its plastic waste* which is predominantly SUP. • Niti Aayog notes that India collects only 60% of its plastic waste with the remaining 40% directly entering the environment, though the numbers are relatively small compared to developed nations but these trends are not sustainable given the volume of plastics in India. • India's plastic usage may rise 4 times by 2050.

What is the issue?

- India's commitment to environmental sustainability led to the announcement that the country would phase out single-use plastics by 2022 in 2018.
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) issued a notification regarding the ban on specific single-use plastic items through the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, it came into effect from July 1, 2022.
- **Selected ban**- India did not encompass ban on all SUP , instead it targeted only 19 selected SUP items based on their utility and impact.
- **Ambiguity**- The criteria used for listing ban on SUPs items were unclear as certain items with high environmental impact scores were not considered for phasing out, leaving large corporations relatively unaffected.
- **Lack of clarity**- India's definition does not distinguish between necessary and unnecessary plastics or between recyclable and non-recyclable plastics.

  India defined single-use plastic for the first time, as a "plastic item intended to be used once for the same purpose before being disposed of or recycled."

- **Presence of non-recyclable items**- India allows multi-layered packaging to still circulate on the basis of the rationale that we do not have alternatives for those

plastics.

What are the steps taken by government to curb SUP?

- **Ban on SUP**- Since July 1, 2022, India has banned the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of single-use plastic items with low utility and high littering potential.
- **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021** - It prohibits identified single use plastic items by 2022, the thickness of plastic carry bags increased from 50 to 75 microns from 2021 and to 120 microns.
- **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022**- The guidelines provide a framework to strengthen the circular economy and develop new alternatives of plastic packaging waste.
- **Comprehensive Action Plan-** Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) issued a plan to all the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and the Pollution Control Committees (PCCs).

Supply side interventions	**Demand side interventions**
• Stopping supply of plastic raw materials • Stopping manufacture of banned SUP items • Stopping sale of banned SUP items	• Stopping usage of banned SUP items- CPCB issued directions to certain plastic raw material manufacturers, sellers of SUPs and e-commerce companies to phase out SUPs. • It also issued directions to all SPCBs and PCCs, Chief Secretaries of all the states, and customs authorities for regulation and to stop import of SUPs
Creating an enabling environment for phasing out single-use plastics	
• Promoting alternatives to single-use plastics (SUPs) • Creating awareness on phasing out SUPs	
Manage SUP legacy waste	
• CPCB monitoring module for compliance on elimination of SUPs. • CPCB grievance redressal app	

- **CSE survey-** The Centre for Science and Environment conducted surveys to understand the extend pf implementation and enforcement of the ban on SUP.

What are the key highlights of CSE survey?

- *Weak enforcement* on ban of SUP by SPCB and local governments.
- Discrepancy in *environmental compensation* as the production and selling units still continue their operation.
- There is a *lack of updates* and progress as mentioned in comprehensive action plan.
- Lack of comprehensive data on fines and manufacturers of SUPs.
- Decline in awareness campaign.
- *Insufficient measures* to halt production of SUPs at the source.
- Carry bags below 120 microns persist as the most widely circulated banned single-use plastic item, constituting almost a third of all such items.
- India is committed to plastic free society but it still allows plastic carry bags in the

market.
- Plastic alternatives market is severely underdeveloped.

What can be done?

- **Capacity Building-** The government officials must be *well trained* and have the necessary tools for effective inspections.
- **Mandatory public disclosure-** The States and local governments should provide *quarterly updates* on environmental compensation levied and units shut/fined on their websites.
- **Promote transparency-** To strengthen data sharing mechanism CPCB should share data collected from private players through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and state authorities through the Single-Use Plastic (SUP) monitoring module.
- **Ban plastic carry bags**- A nationwide ban on plastic carry bags irrespective of thickness should be implemented similar to the successful bans in East African countries (Tanzania and Rwanda) and Himachal Pradesh.

Himachal Pradesh through its Non-biodegradable Garbage Control Act of 1998 has completely banned the production, distribution, storage and use of carry bag

- **Invest in SUP alternatives**- It can be done by providing subsidies and reduced tax rates for alternatives this would provide a competitive market for alternative SUPs
- **Tamilnadu model**- *Meendum Manjappai* scheme is the awareness campaign on using yellow cloth bags and discard plastic bags.
- **Kerala initiative**- Reusables in government offices switch to ink pens and steel cutlery to ensure articles like plastic water bottles, disposable teacups and plastic carry bags are no longer used

References

1. Down To Earth- Single Use Plastic crisis in India
2. PIB- Plastic Waste Management Rules 2021

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