

## **Single Use Plastic**

### **Why in news?**

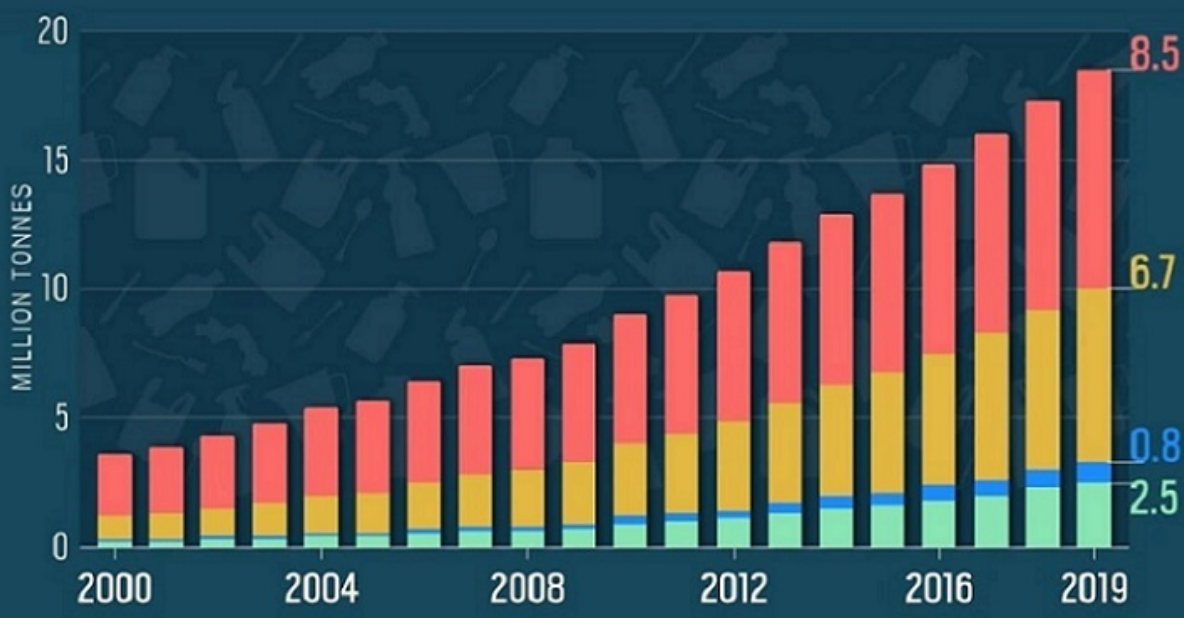
The Single Use Plastic (SUP) plastic ban in India addresses roughly 11% of the entire gamut of single-use plastic waste.

### **Status of SUP in India**

- According to the report Plastic Waste Makers Index 2019, India was the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> in the list of companies producing polymers.
- India ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> globally, contributing 5.5 million tonnes of SUP waste, and ranked 94<sup>th</sup> 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.

# MENACE OF PLASTIC WASTE IN INDIA

## LESS THAN 15% PLASTIC WASTE GET RECYCLED



 Source: OECD  
Graphics: Samrat Sharma & Mudita Singh

- 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stopping supply of plastic raw materials</li><li>• Stopping manufacture of banned SUP items</li><li>• Stopping sale of banned SUP items</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• 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</li></ul>

## 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 extent of 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](#)

