



E-Waste Day

For Prelims: Basel Convention, Nairobi Declaration, E-Waste Management Rules, e-waste clinic

For Mains: Challenges Related to the Management of E-Waste in India

Why in News?

International E-Waste Day is held on October 14 every year since 2018 as an opportunity to reflect on the impacts of e-waste.

- This year's theme is **'Recycle it all, no matter how small'**.
- Roughly 5.3 billion mobile/smartphones will drop out of use in 2022, according to **non-profit Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Forum**, which started the day in 2018.

What is WEEE Forum?

- It is the world's largest multi-national centre of competence as regards operational know-how concerning the management of waste electrical and electronic equipment (or 'WEEE', for short).
- It is a **not-for-profit association of 46 WEEE producer responsibility organisations** across the world and was founded in April 2002.
- Through exchange of best practice and access to its reputable knowledge base toolbox, the WEEE Forum enables its members to improve their operations and be known as **promoters of the circular economy**.

What is E-Waste?

- E-Waste is short for Electronic-Waste and the term is **used to describe old, end-of-life or discarded electronic appliances**. It includes their components, consumables, parts and spares.
- Laws to manage e-waste have been in place in India since 2011, mandating that only authorised dismantlers and recyclers collect e-waste. [E-waste \(Management\) Rules, 2016](#) was enacted in 2017.
- **India's first e-waste clinic** for segregating, processing and disposal of waste from household and commercial units has been set-up in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**.
- Originally, the [Basel Convention](#) (1992) did not mention e-waste but later it addressed the issues of e-waste in 2006 (COP8).
 - The **Nairobi Declaration** was adopted at COP9 of the Basel Convention on the Control of the Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Waste. It aimed at creating innovative solutions for the environmentally sound management of electronic wastes.

What are the Challenges Related to the Management of E-Waste in India?

- **Less Involvement of People:** A key factor in used electronic devices not being given for recycling was because consumers themselves did not do so. However, in recent years, countries around the world have been attempting to pass effective **'right to repair'** laws.

- **Involvement of Child Labor:** In India, about 4.5 lakh child laborers in the age group of 10-14 are observed to be engaged in various E-waste activities and that too without adequate protection and safeguards in various yards and recycling workshops.
- **Ineffective Legislation:** There is the absence of any public information on most State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)/PCC websites.
- **Health Hazards:** E-waste contains over 1,000 toxic materials, which contaminate soil and groundwater.
- **Lack of Incentive Schemes:** No clear guidelines are there for the unorganized sector to handle E-waste. Also, no incentives are mentioned to lure people engaged to adopt a formal path for handling E-waste.
- **E-waste Imports:** Cross-border flow of waste equipment into India- 80% of E-waste in developed countries meant for recycling is sent to developing countries such as India, China, Ghana, and Nigeria.
- **The Reluctance of Authorities' Involved:** Lack of coordination between various authorities responsible for E-waste management and disposal including the non-involvement of municipalities.
- **Security Implications:** End of life computers often contain sensitive personal information and bank account details which, if not deleted leave opportunity for fraud.

What are the Provisions regarding E-waste in India?

- India has a formal set of rules for electronic waste management, first announced these rules in 2016 and amended it in 2018.
 - Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has released the [draft notification for Electronic Waste Management](#).
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the [E-Waste Management Rules, 2016](#) in supersession of the E-waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011.
- Over 21 products (Schedule-I) were included under the purview of the rule. It included Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other mercury containing lamps, as well as other such equipment.
- For the first time, the rules brought the producers under [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#), along with targets. Producers have been made responsible for the collection of E-waste and for its exchange.
- Various producers can have a separate Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) and ensure collection of E-waste, as well as its disposal in an environmentally sound manner.
- **Deposit Refund Scheme** has been introduced as an additional economic instrument wherein the **producer charges an additional amount as a deposit** at the time of sale of the electrical and electronic equipment and returns it to the consumer along with interest when the end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment is returned.
- The **role of State Governments** has been also introduced **to ensure safety, health and skill development of the workers** involved in dismantling and recycling operations.
- A provision of penalty for violation of rules has also been introduced.
- **Urban Local Bodies** (Municipal Committee/Council/Corporation) have been **assigned the duty to collect and channelize** the orphan products to authorized dismantlers or recyclers.
- Allocation of proper space to existing and upcoming industrial units for e-waste dismantling and recycling.

Way Forward

- **Policies and Better Implementation:** There are various startups and companies in India that have now started to collect and recycle electronic waste. We need better implementation methodologies and inclusion policies that provide accommodation and validation for the informal sector to step up and help us meet our recycling targets in an environmentally sound manner.
- **Need of Inclusion:** Also, successfully raising collection rates required every actor to be involved, including consumers.
- **Encouraging Informal Sector:** It is needed to come up with a strategy to engage with informal sector workers because doing so will not only go a long way in better e-waste management practices but also aid in environmental protection, improve the health and working conditions of labourers and provide better work opportunities to over a million people.
- **Increase in Employment:** The need of the hour is to generate employment, which can be done through identifying and promoting cooperatives and expanding the scope of the E-Waste

(Management) Rules, 2016 to these cooperatives or the informal sector workers.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. What are the impediments in disposing the huge quantities of discarded solid waste which are continuously being generated? How do we remove safely the toxic wastes that have been accumulating in our habitable environment? **(2018)**

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