



World Environment Day 2025

For Prelims: [World Environment Day](#), [Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam](#), [Aravalli Green Wall Project](#), [United Nations General Assembly](#), [Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment](#), [Microplastics](#), [Aravali Mountain Range](#), [Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas](#), [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2024](#), [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#), [Single-use Plastics \(SUPs\)](#), [Pyrolysis](#). —

For Mains: World Environment Day, Plastic pollution and its implication on environment and human health, Measures needed to combat plastic pollution.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

[World Environment Day \(WED\)](#) 2025 is being celebrated on **5th June 2025**, with **South Korea (Republic of Korea)** serving as the **global host**.

- Additionally, the Prime Minister will plant a **Banyan sapling** under the [Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam](#) initiative as part of the '[Aravalli Green Wall project](#)'.

What is World Environment Day 2025?

- **About:** WED was established by the [United Nations General Assembly](#) in **1972**, coinciding with the **opening day of the [Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment](#)**—the first major global summit focused on environmental issues.
 - The event has been **led by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#)**, since its inception in 1973.
 - This landmark conference marked a **turning point in the global environmental movement**.
- **Theme:** The theme "**Beat Plastic Pollution**," aims to raise awareness about the **production, use, and disposal of plastics**, and promote solutions like **refusing, reducing, reusing, and recycling** plastic use.
- **Significance:** Plastic pollution worsens [pollution](#), [biodiversity loss](#), and [climate change](#). Annually, **11 million tonnes** of plastic enter water bodies, while [microplastics](#) from **landfills and sewage** pollute soil.
 - The global cost of plastic pollution is estimated at **USD 300-600 billion per year**. India produces approximately **9.3 million tonnes** of plastic waste each year, accounting for nearly **20% of the global total**.
 - **Burning** over **5.8 million tonnes** yearly releases **toxic pollutants**.

'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' Campaign

- **About:** It aims to **honor mothers by encouraging tree planting in their names**,

combining **environmental conservation** with a **tribute to motherhood**, symbolizing how **mothers, like trees, nurture and sustain life**.

◦ It was launched by the **Prime Minister** on **World Environment Day, 5th June, 2024**.

- **Objective:** To promote **environmental preservation**, increase forest cover, and support **sustainable development** while **honoring mothers**.
- **World Record Achievement:** On **22nd September 2024**, **128 Infantry Battalion & Ecological Task Force** of the **Territorial Army** planted **over 5 lakh saplings** in one hour in **Jaisalmer**.

Aravali Green Wall Project

- **About:** It aims to establish a **1,400 km long and 5 km wide green belt buffer** around the **Aravalli Mountain range**, spanning the states of **Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi**.
 - It is inspired by Africa's '**Great Green Wall**' project, which stretches from **Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east** and was launched in 2007.
- **Objectives:** It aims to **combat land degradation** and the **eastward spread of the Thar desert** by creating a **green belt from Porbandar to Panipat** along the **Aravalli range**.
 - This **afforestation effort** will **restore degraded land, block desert dust** from western India and Pakistan, enhance biodiversity, and improve **ecosystem services** like **carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and water quality**.
- **Need:** According to the **Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas** by **ISRO**, **97.85 million hectares (29.7%)** of India's **total geographical area (328.72 mha)** experienced land degradation in 2018-19.
 - The **Aravali** is a key degraded zone targeted for greening under India's goal to restore **26 million hectares** of land.

What are the Main Causes of High Plastic Pollution in India?

- **High Plastic Consumption:** India generates about **3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually**, with a **per capita plastic consumption of around 11 kg per year**, driven by rising industrialization and consumerism.
 - Consequently, India ranks among the **top 10 plastic-polluting countries globally**.
- **Poor Waste Management:** Only **15-20% of plastic waste is recycled** in India, while the remaining waste ends up in **landfills, water bodies, or is burned**.
 - Most recycling is informal, with **90% carried out by waste pickers working in unsafe conditions**.
- **Domination of Single-Use Plastics:** In 2023, nearly **43% of India's total plastic waste—about 4.07 million tonnes—was single-use plastic**. Despite bans in some states, **enforcement remains weak**, and alternatives are often **expensive or unavailable**.
- **Plastic Waste in Rivers & Oceans:** Three of the world's top ten rivers carrying **90% of plastic waste—the Ganga, Indus, and Brahmaputra—are in India**. The country contributes **0.6 million tonnes of plastic waste to the oceans annually**.
- **Rapid Urbanization:** Waste from **Tier 1 cities** accounts for **72.5% of India's daily waste**. In cities like **Bengaluru and Mumbai**, where daily waste exceeds **9,000 tonnes**, plastic pollution reflects a **structural failure in planning, design, and governance**.
 - Many consumers and small businesses lack awareness of **sustainable alternatives and proper disposal methods**.

What are the Issues Associated With Mismanaged Plastic Waste in India?

- **Environmental Degradation:** Plastic waste in landfills releases **toxic chemicals** like **phthalates** and **Bisphenol A (BPA)** into soil, affecting **agriculture**.
 - Burning plastic emits **dioxins and heavy metals**, contaminating **farmland**.

- **Microplastics** in **rivers** harm **aquatic species**, while **stray animals**, and **marine species** ingest plastic, leading to **intestinal blockages and death**.
- **Public Health Risks:** Each year, **5.8 million tonnes of plastic waste** are openly burned across India, mainly in **rural areas and urban slums**, releasing carcinogens like **dioxins and furans**.
 - **Microplastics** have been found in **Indian table salt, seafood, and drinking water**.
 - Additionally, **clogged drains from plastic waste** create stagnant water, worsening **malaria and dengue outbreaks**.
- **Economic Costs:** A **FICCI report** estimates India could lose over **USD 133 billion** in material value from plastic packaging by 2030, with **USD 68 billion** lost due to uncollected plastic waste.
 - Plastic-littered beaches **deter tourists**, harming coastal economies. Municipal corporations spend **Rs 1,500-2,000 crore annually** on drain cleaning.

What are the Regulations Related to Plastic Waste Management in India?

- [Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016](#)
- [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2022](#)
- [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2024](#)
- [Swachh Bharat Mission](#)
- [India Plastics Pact](#)

What Steps can be Taken to Strengthen Plastic Waste Management in India?

- **Strengthen Policy & Enforcement:** Enforce the **2022 ban on single-use plastic items** with strict penalties for violators.
 - Ensure compliance with the **2022 [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#) rules**, mandating **FMCG and e-commerce brands** to **collect and recycle their plastic waste**.
- **Improve Waste Management Infrastructure:** India's plastic waste recycling rates have dropped sharply **from 60% to as low as 15-20%**, highlighting the need for more **Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs)**.
 - Integrating **waste pickers** into formal systems with **fair wages and safety gear**—as seen in Pune's **SWaCH cooperative**—can improve efficiency.
- **Reduce Plastic Use & Promote Alternatives:** Impose **higher taxes on [single-use plastics \(SUPs\)](#)** and promote **sustainable alternatives**. Encourage use of **bamboo/cloth bags, edible cutlery** (e.g., millet-based spoons), and **biodegradable packaging** (e.g., **Ecoware's** plant-based containers).
- **Public Awareness & Behavioral Change:** The **[Swachh Bharat Mission](#)** should integrate **plastic waste awareness** through community and school programs.
 - Campaigns like **"Plastic Lao, Thaila Pao"** in Delhi offer groceries in exchange for plastic waste.
 - Schools should teach the **3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)**, as done in Gujarat's **"Plastic Waste Free Schools"** initiative.
- **Technological & Innovative Solutions:** **[Pyrolysis](#) plants** like Pune's **Rudra Environmental Solutions** convert non-recyclable plastic into **diesel**, offering a sustainable disposal method.
 - Additionally, India has constructed **over one lakh kilometres of roads** using **plastic waste** across **at least 11 states**, showcasing an innovative reuse approach.

Conclusion

World Environment Day 2025 highlights the **urgent need for global and local action** against plastic waste. India's **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'** campaign and the **Aravalli Green Wall project** showcase its **commitment to sustainability**, but **stronger policies, public participation, and innovation** are crucial to effectively **combat plastic pollution** and **environmental degradation**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the socio-economic impact of mismanaged plastic waste in society. What policy measures can be adopted to address this issue?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q.1 In India, 'extend producer responsibility' was introduced as an important feature in which of the following? (2019)

- (a) The Bio-medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1998
- (b) The Recycled Plastic (Manufacturing and Usage) Rules, 1999
- (c) The e-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011
- (d) The Food Safety and Standard Regulations, 2011

Ans: (c)

Mains

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

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