



## Ban on Single-Use Plastics

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The Union government in a bid to free India of **single-use plastics by 2022**, has laid out a multi-ministerial plan to discourage the use of single-use plastics across the country.

- The nationwide ban on **plastic** bags, cups, plates, small bottles, straws and certain types of sachets is set to begin from October 2 to eliminate single-use plastics from cities and villages that rank among the world's most polluted.
- The ban will be comprehensive and will cover every sector from manufacturing to the usage and import of such items.
- The Nodal Ministry for the scheme is the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** (MoEF&CC) ensured with the task of:
  - **Enforcing** the ban on single-use plastics, &
  - **Finalizing** the pending policy for **Extended Producer Responsibility** (a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility financially and/or physically for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products) for milk products.

## Other Stakeholders

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- **National Highway Authority of India (NHAI)** will ensure that the plastic waste is collected and transported responsibly along National Highways.
  - The collected plastic waste will be used for **road construction**.
  - Roads constructed using water plastic are **durable** against extreme weather conditions and are also **cost-effective**.
- The **Department of Industrial Promotion** (Ministry of Commerce & Industry) will ensure that all **cement factories** use **plastic as fuel**.
- The **Ministry of Railways** will organize **massive shramdaans** (voluntary work) on October 2 for the collection of plastic waste at railway stations and along the rail tracks.
  - It will also run **advertising radio spots** on all trains.
- **Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry** has decided to put-forth a blanket ban on all

types of single-use plastic that is used in the ministry & the PSUs including Food Corporation of India (FCI).

- **Ministry of Tourism** is set to ensure & create awareness on single-use plastic at iconic tourist spots.
- **Ministry of Textiles** has pushed for greater production of jute bags to replace plastic bags.

## Global Initiatives

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- Concerns are growing worldwide about increasing plastic pollution, with a particular focus on the oceans, where nearly 50% of single-use plastic products end up killing marine life and entering the human food chain.

In this regard, the **European Union** has planned to ban single-use plastic items such as straws, forks, knives and cotton buds by 2021.

- **China's** commercial hub of Shanghai is gradually restraining the use of single-use plastics in catering services. Its island province of **Hainan** has vowed to completely eliminate single-use plastic by 2025.
- On **World Environment Day, 2018** the world leaders vowed to “**Beat Plastic Pollution**” & eliminate its use completely.

## Way Forward

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- In India, with rising e-commerce purchases, the use of plastic has significantly increased. These companies need to cut back on plastic packaging that makes up nearly 40% of India's annual plastic consumption.

In this regard, **Amazon Inc's** initiative to replace all single-use plastic in its packaging by June 2020 with paper cushions is a welcome step.

- In the absence of robust testing and certification agencies in India, to verify the claims made by producers, spurious biodegradable and compostable plastics are entering the marketplace. There is an urgent requirement of **establishing such labs and agencies**.
- Since 70% of the total plastic waste in India is from urban areas, there is a need for urban local bodies to start a massive shramdaan exercise to collect and segregate waste into recyclable and non-recyclable categories, which can then be recycled accordingly.
- In spite of the notification of the **Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2016**, and amendments made two years later, most cities and towns are not prepared to implement the provisions of the rules. Provisions should be taken into consideration for strict implementation of the rules.
- An effective ban on single-use plastic can happen if an **alternative is available** in the market. Cloth or jute bags, locally tailored and produced, can be a viable alternative.

**Source: TH**