

Plastic Pollution

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Context:

A parliamentary panel raised concerns over the ineffective handling of plastic waste in the country, citing a report from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

Background:

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in its 57-page report underlined the absence of effective measures that could save people from the hazards of plastic pollution.

About Plastic Pollution:

Plastic pollution refers to the accumulation of plastic waste in the environment, leading to negative impacts on ecosystems, wildlife, human health, and overall ecological balance.

Issues associated with plastic waste in India:

1. Like much of the world, India is struggling to dispose of its growing quantities of plastic waste given how ubiquitous it has become—from our toothbrushes to debit cards. A little over 10,000 tonnes a day of plastic waste remains uncollected.
2. India's packaging industry is the biggest consumer of plastics. A 2020 study on packaging in India projects a loss of almost 133 billion dollars' worth of plastic material value over the next decade due to unsustainable packaging. Unsustainable packaging involves general packaging through single-use plastic.
3. The popularity of online retail and food delivery apps, though restricted to big cities, is contributing to the rise in plastic waste. India's biggest online delivery start-ups Swiggy and Zomato are each reportedly delivering about 28 million orders a month.
4. Polluting plastics can affect the world's tiniest organisms, such as When these organisms become poisoned due to plastic ingestion, this causes problems for the larger animals that depend on them for food. Larger items, such as plastic bags and straws, can choke and starve marine life, while smaller fragments (microplastics) can cause liver, reproductive, and gastrointestinal damage in animals and it can directly impact the blue economy as well.
5. The World Health Organisation published shocking research in 2018 that exposed the presence of microplastics in 90% of bottled water. Plastic toxicity in humans can lead to hormonal disruption and adverse reproductive and birth outcomes.

How is India addressing the concerns regarding plastic waste?

1. India launched a nationwide awareness campaign on single-use plastics on World Environment Day in June 2022. A mobile app for Single Use Plastics Grievance Redressal was also launched to empower citizens to check the sale/usage/manufacturing of SUP in their area and tackle the plastic menace.
2. Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules of 2022 prohibits the manufacture, import,

stocking, distribution, sale, and use of several single-use plastic items as of July 1, 2022. It has also mandated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) that incorporates circularity by making manufacturers of products responsible for collecting and processing their products upon the end of the product's lifetime.

3. India Plastics Pact is the first of its kind in Asia. The Plastics Pact is an ambitious and collaborative initiative to bring stakeholders together to reduce, reuse, and recycle plastics within the material's value chain.
4. Project REPLAN (stands for REducing PLastic in Nature) launched by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) aims to reduce the consumption of plastic bags by providing a more sustainable alternative.



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