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# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## **Issue of Marine Plastic**

### **Context:**

According to the Central Pollution Control Boards (CPCB) Annual Report on Implementing the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, the plastic waste generated in 2018-19 was 3.3 million tones per year (**roughly 9,200 tones per day**).

### **About:**

### **Marine Plastic:**

- Plastic is a synthetic organic polymer made from petroleum with properties ideally suited for a wide variety of applications, including packaging, building and construction, household and sports equipment, vehicles, electronics and agriculture. Plastic is cheap, lightweight, strong and malleable.
- Over 300 million tons of plastic are produced every year, half of which is used to design single-use items such as shopping bags, cups and straws.
- Only 9% of plastic waste is recycled. Approximately 12% is burnt, while 79% has accumulated in landfills.
- According to the IUCN, at least 8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans every year.

### **Sources of Marine Plastic:**

- The main sources of marine plastic are land-based, from urban and storm runoff, sewer overflows, beach visitors, inadequate waste disposal and management, industrial activities, construction and illegal dumping.
- Ocean-based plastic originates mainly from the fishing industry, nautical activities and aquaculture.
- Under the influence of solar UV radiation, wind, currents and other natural factors, plastic fragments into small particles, termed microplastics (particles smaller than 5 mm) or nanoplastics (particles smaller than 100 nm).
- In addition, microbeads, a type of microplastic, are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants in health and beauty products, such as cleansers and toothpastes. These tiny particles easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in the ocean and lakes.

### Concerns of Marine Plastic Waste:

- Plastic waste blocks our sewers, threatening marine life and generating health risks for residents in landfills or the natural environment.
- The financial costs of marine plastic pollution are significant as well.
- According to a forecast made in March 2020, the direct harm to the blue economy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will be USD 2.1 billion per year.
- Enormous social costs accompany these economic costs. Residents of coastal regions suffer from the harmful health impacts of plastic pollution and waste brought in by the tides.
- Boats may become entangled in abandoned or discarded fishing nets or their engines may become blocked with plastic debris.
- It can create problems for industries such as Shipping, fisheries and aquaculture and maritime tourism which affect livelihood of the coastal community.

### Steps Taken So Far:

- **GloLitter Partnerships Project:**
  - It is launched by the International maritime Organization IMO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and . initial funding from the Government of Norway.
  - **Aim:** To prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from shipping and fisheries.
  - It will also assist developing countries in reducing marine litter, including plastic litter, from within the maritime transport and fisheries sectors, and to decrease the use of plastics in these industries.

- Also assist in identifying opportunities to reuse and recycle plastics.
- 30 countries including India have joined this global initiative to tackle marine litter.
- World Environment Day, 2018 hosted in India, the world leaders vowed to “Beat Plastic Pollution” & eliminate its use completely.
- **Specific to India:**
  - Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 state that every local body has to be responsible for setting up infrastructure for segregation, collection, processing, and disposal of plastic waste.
  - Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018 introduced the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
  - Ban on single use plastics in a bid to free India of single-use plastics by 2022.

### Solutions:

- **Designing a product:** Identifying plastic items that can be replaced with non-plastic, recyclable, or biodegradable materials is the first step.
- Countries must embrace circular and sustainable economic practices throughout the plastics value chain to accomplish this.
- **Pricing:** Plastics are inexpensive which provide fewer economic incentives to employ recycled plastics. Balancing price structure with environmental health should be a priority.
- **Technologies and Innovation:** Developing tools and technology to assist governments in measuring and monitoring plastic garbage in cities.
- India should start projects like the ‘Closing the loop’ project of the United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific which assists cities in developing more inventive policy solutions to tackle the problem.
- **Promoting a plastic-free workplaces** All single-use goods can be replaced with reusable items or more sustainable single-use alternatives.
- **Producer responsibility: Extended responsibility** can be applied in the retail (packaging) sector, where producers are responsible for collecting and recycling products that they launch into the market.
- **Municipal and community actions:** Beach and river clean-ups, public awareness campaigns and disposable plastic bag bans and levies.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Government ministries at the national and local levels must collaborate in the development, implementation and oversight of policies related to plastic waste management.

# The New Ministry of Co-operation

## Context:

Recently, a separate 'Ministry of Co-operation' has been created by the Central Government for realizing the vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhi' (Prosperity through Cooperation) and to give a new push to the cooperative movement.

The Government has signaled its deep commitment to community based developmental partnership. It also fulfils the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister in 2021.

## About:

### Significance of Ministry of Co-operation:

- It will provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
- It will help deepen Co-operatives as a true people based movement reaching up to the grassroots.
- It will work to streamline processes for 'Ease of doing business' for co-operatives and enable development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS).

### 'Co-operatives':

- According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), a cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.
- There are of cooperatives such as Consumer Cooperative Society, Producer Cooperative Society, Credit Cooperative Society, Housing Cooperative Society and Marketing Cooperative Society.
- The United Nations General Assembly had declared the year 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives.
- India is an agricultural country and laid the foundation of World's biggest cooperative movement in the world.
- In India, a Co-operative based economic development model is very relevant where each member works with a spirit of responsibility.

### Constitutional Provisions Related to Cooperatives:

- The Constitution (97<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Act, 2011 added a new Part IXB right after Part IXA (Municipals) regarding the cooperatives working in India.
- The word “cooperatives” was added after “unions and associations” in Article 19(1)(c) under Part III of the Constitution. This enables all the citizens to form cooperatives by giving it the status of fundamental right of citizens.
- A new Article 43B was added in the DPSP (Part IV) regarding the “promotion of cooperative societies”.

### Importance of Cooperatives:

- It provides agricultural credits and funds where state and private sectors have not been able to do very much.
- It provides strategic inputs for the agricultural-sector; consumer societies meet their consumption requirements at concessional rates.
- It is an organization for the poor who wish to solve their problems collectively.
- It softens the class conflicts and reduces the social cleavages.
- It reduces the bureaucratic evils and follies of political factions;
- It overcomes the constraints of agricultural development;
- It creates a conducive environment for small and cottage industries.

### Challenges:

1. **Mismanagement and Manipulation:**
  - A hugely large membership turns out to be mismanaged unless some secure methods are employed to manage such co-operatives.
  - In the elections to the governing bodies, money became such a powerful tool that the top posts of chairman and vice-chairman usually went to the richest farmers who manipulated the organization for their benefits.
2. **Lack of Awareness:**
  - People are not well informed about the objectives of the Movement, rules and regulations of co-operative institutions.
3. **Restricted Coverage:**
  - Most of these societies are confined to a few members and their operations extended to only one or two villages.
4. **Functional Weakness:**
  - The Co-operative Movement has suffered from inadequacy of trained personnel.

### Way Forward

- New areas are emerging with the advancement of technology and cooperative societies can play a huge role in making people familiar with those areas and technologies.
- Principle of the cooperative movement is to unite everyone, even while remaining anonymous. The cooperative movement has the capacity to solve people's problems.
- However, there are irregularities in cooperatives and to check them there have to be rules and stricter implementation.
- To strengthen the cooperatives there should be market linkages for agricultural farmers as well as cooperative societies.

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