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Mikhail Gorbachev

News: No state funeral for Mikhail Gorbachev after his death at 91.

General Studies Paper 1: History of the World will include events from the 18th century such as Industrial Revolution, world wars, Redrawing of National Boundaries, Colonization, Decolonization, political philosophies like Communism, Capitalism, Socialism etc.— their forms and effect on society.



Who was Mikhail Gorbachev?

- Mikhail Gorbachev was a Soviet politician. Gorbachev served as the last general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985–91) as well as the last president of the Soviet Union (1990–91).
- Both as general secretary and as president, Gorbachev supported democratic reforms. He enacted policies of **glasnost** (“openness”) and **perestroika** (“restructuring”), and he pushed for disarmament and demilitarization in eastern Europe.
- Gorbachev had set out to revitalise the moribund Communist system and shape a new union based on a more equal partnership between the 15 republics, of which the two most powerful were Russia and Ukraine.

- He attempted political and economic reforms simultaneously and on too ambitious a scale, unleashing forces he could not control.
- Gorbachev's policies ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990–91.
- He was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize, 1990** for the role that he, (then Soviet president) had played in ending the Cold War without bloodshed.

What are Gorbachev's reform mantras?

Gorbachev's legacy is defined by two words: "perestroika" and "glasnost".

- **Perestroika:** Perestroika, means **restructuring**. When Gorbachev took over as the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, the then USSR was already groaning under the inefficiencies of a planned economy.. Gorbachev was acutely aware that the USSR needed to restructure its economy, and in particular, allow for a greater play of the market forces. But his idea of perestroika was not limited to the economic sphere. He had hoped that just like ill-effects of a top-down planned economy had spread through the social and moral fabric of Soviet life, economic restructuring, too, will lead to a social and political renewal.
- **Glasnost:** Glasnost means **openness**. While it meant greater transparency in the functioning of the government and the economy, Gorbachev's hope was that this would also reorder the way people lived their everyday life in the USSR. The scale of Soviet achievements had been radically inflated and falsified by the officials. It was mentioned by Richard Sakwa in his book titled "The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union", that contrary to the official account — that in 1985 Soviet income had multiplied 84 times the 1928 level — the actual increase had been less than 7 times. During Soviet rule even top dozen political figures in the entire country— was not allowed to see the country's consolidated figures for revenue and expenditure. This lack of transparency led to Glasnost.

Some of the mistakes of Gorbachev:

- He attempted political and economic reforms simultaneously and on too ambitious a scale, hence unleashing forces he could not control.
- Gorbachev never stood for election to earn himself a popular mandate – unlike his great rival Boris Yeltsin, who was voted into power as president of Russia and was instrumental in the dissolution of the USSR and the ousting of Gorbachev.
- He failed to anticipate the strength of nationalist feeling – initially in the Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and spreading to others like Georgia and Ukraine – that would create unstoppable momentum to escape Moscow's grip.
- Like all Soviet leaders, he saw the Soviet Union as synonymous with Russia and he simply could not understand why nations wanted to be independent.
- He didn't really understand the Soviet Union, Soviet society and how it worked: Fear, repression, command economy was preserving the Soviet system but he thought it could be reformed and still preserve the system. But they turned out to be the actual essential elements of the Soviet system – having removed them, the system unravelled as well.

- Ultimate tragedies of Gorbachev is that none of the points that he ultimately came to accept and espouse have been preserved by the leaders of Russia today:
- Putin smashed the idea embodied by Gorbachev that Russia could retreat from empire and still remain a major power.
- Putin's lurch into confrontation with the West and his invasion of Ukraine have destroyed the Gorbachev legacy of detente with the West and nuclear arms agreements with the United States.
- With Putin pointedly boasting of the size and destructive power of Russia's arsenal, politicians in both Moscow and Washington have evoked the risk of World War Three.

Conclusion on Mikhail Gorbachev's personality:

- For all the adulation he inspired in the West, Mikhail Gorbachev was a tragic figure who failed in the historic mission he had defined for his own country. But Russians have long been accustomed to viewing him as a weak leader who was duped by the West as witnessed from the fact that there will be no state funeral for Mikhail Gorbachev.

Sharad

New Naval Ensign

News: The new ensign was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kochi during the commissioning of India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

GS Paper 1: Decolonization

GS Paper 3: Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

What is a Naval Ensign?

- As the name suggests, a naval ensign is a flag that is installed atop naval warships, on ground stations, at air bases and other institutions used as a form of maritime identification.
- Indian naval ensign is also known as Nishaan meaning symbol.
- Every country's navy has its own ensign which can be the same as their country's flag or a distant one. For example, the US Navy's ensign is the same as its national flag but many other navies have distinctive naval ensigns which are used by their war vessels.

Evolution of Naval Ensign:

This is the fourth time since 1950 that the Naval Ensign has undergone a change.

- **On 26 January 1950**, when India became a republic, the Navy Crest and flags were duly 'Indianised'. However, the latter (Ensign and Distinguishing Flags) retained a

touch of the British legacy — the red St. George's Cross – though the Union flag was replaced by India's tricolour. While during the post-colonial period, other ex-colonial Navies discarded the red St George's Cross in their new ensigns and flags, the Indian Navy retained it till 2001.



- It was **on 15 August 2001**, that the design of the ensign was changed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government and the Cross made its way out of the Indian Navy ensign.



- However, **in April 2004**, the original ensign was adopted again with certain additions as there were complaints within the force that the blue of the naval crest was indistinguishable from the sky and the ocean. The ensign was changed back to St George's Cross with the addition of the Indian emblem in its intersection.



- **In 2014**, the ensign as well as the naval crest were updated to include the national motto "Satyameva Jayate" in the Devanagari script.



Attributes of New Ensign of Navy:

- The White Ensign identified nation-wide with the Navy, now comprises two main constituents – the National Flag in the upper left canton, and a Navy Blue – Gold octagon at the centre of the fly side (away from the staff).
- The Octagon is with twin golden octagonal borders encompassing the golden National Emblem (Lion Capital of Ashoka – underscribed with 'Satyameva Jayate' in blue Devnagri script) resting atop an anchor; and superimposed on a shield. Below

the shield, within the octagon, in a golden bordered ribbon, on a Navy Blue background, is inscribed the motto of the Indian Navy 'Sam No Varunah' in golden Devnagriscript.

- The design encompassed within the octagon has been taken from the Indian Naval crest, wherein the fouled anchor, which is also associated with colonial legacy, has been replaced with a clear anchor underscoring the steadfastness of the Indian Navy.



Significance of new naval ensign

- In a statement, the Navy said the twin octagonal borders draw their inspiration from Shivaji Maharaj **Rajmudra or the Seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji**, who “built a credible Naval Fleet that earned grudging admiration from European Navies operating in the region at the time.”
- The octagonal shape also represents the eight directions (four cardinal and four inter cardinal), symbolising the Indian Navy’s global outreach.
- The Navy added that the octagon stands for good fortune, eternity, renewal and draws positive energy from all directions.
- The new Naval White Ensign is thus rooted in the “glorious maritime heritage of India, as well as reflective of our Navy’s present-day capabilities”.

YOJNA IAS

Sharad

Single Use Plastics

News: In keeping with the spirit of the ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’, the country is taking steps to curb littered and unmanaged plastic waste pollution.

GS Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.



What is single-use plastic?

- It refers to plastic items that are used once and discarded. Single-use plastic has among the highest shares of plastic manufactured and used — from packaging of items, to bottles (shampoo, detergents, cosmetics), polythene bags, face masks, coffee cups, cling film, trash bags, food packaging etc.

Key findings of a report by the Australian philanthropic organisations the Minderoo Foundation

- Single-use plastics account for a third of all plastic produced globally, with 98% manufactured from fossil fuels.
- Single-use plastic also accounts for the majority of plastic discarded – 130 million metric tonnes globally in 2019 all of which is burned, buried in landfills or discarded directly into the environment
- The report found that India features in the top 100 countries of single-use plastic waste generation – at rank 94 (the top three being Singapore, Australia and Oman)
- India's net generation of single-use plastic waste is 5.6 MMT, and per capita generation is 4 kg with domestic production of 11.8 million metric tonnes annually, and import of 2.9 MMT.

What is the environmental damage from single-use plastic?

- Unlike thicker and denser plastic material, single-use plastic objects being light and flexible are less amenable to being recycled. While 99% of plastic is recycled, they constitute heavier plastics that are likely to be collected by ragpickers and plastic waste recyclers.
- Single use plastics do not provide an incentive enough for the effort needed to collect them and hence they lie around, leach their toxins into the soil and cause environmental damage in both land and sea.

What are global responses towards tackling pollution due to plastics?

- **Bangladesh** became the first country to ban thin plastic bags in 2002; **New Zealand** banned plastic bags in July 2019. **China** has issued a ban on plastic bags in 2020 with a phased implementation. **Vanuatu** and the **Seychelles** have banned plastic straws outright.

- India piloted a **resolution** on single-use plastics pollution at the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019, recognising the urgent need for the global community to address this issue. This resolution was adopted at the UN Environment Assembly as an important step forward.
- In the recently concluded 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2022, India engaged constructively with all member states to develop a consensus on a resolution to drive global action against plastic pollution.
- Currently, **68 countries** have plastic bag bans with varying degrees of enforcement.

What are the key features of Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022?

Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022

- It prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 75 microns.
- From December 31, 2022, plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 120 microns will be banned.
- It means that the ban does not cover all plastic bags; however, it requires the manufacturers to produce plastic bags thicker than 75 microns which was earlier 50 microns.
- As per the notification, the standard shall be increased to 120 microns in December this year.
- The notification clearly mentioned that plastic or PVC banners/ hoardings should have more than 100 microns in thickness, and non-woven plastic (polypropylene) must be more than 60 GSM (grams per square metre).
- Non-woven plastic bags have a cloth-like texture but are counted among plastics. Still, plastic or PET bottles, counted among the most recyclable types of plastic, have been left out of the scope of the ban.
- Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022 provides for **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** where it is the responsibility of a producer for the environmentally sound management of the product until the end of its life.
- These guidelines provide a framework to strengthen the **circular economy of plastic packaging waste, promote the development of new alternatives to plastic packaging and provide the next steps for moving towards sustainable plastic packaging by businesses.**

What are the items being banned from 1st July, 2022?

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have announced ban on following items:

- Earbuds.
- Balloon sticks.
- Candy and ice-cream sticks
- Cutlery items including plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives, trays.

- Sweet boxes.
- Invitation cards.
- Cigarette packs.
- PVC banners measuring under 100 microns.
- Polystyrene for decoration.
- According to the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, there is also a complete ban on sachets using plastic material for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala.

How will the ban be enforced?

- The ban will be monitored by the CPCB from the Centre, and by the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) that will report to the Centre regularly.
- Directions have been issued at national, state and local levels — for example, to all petrochemical industries — to not supply raw materials to industries engaged in the banned items.
- Directions have also been issued to SPCBs and Pollution Control Committees to modify or revoke consent to operate issued under the Air/Water Act to industries engaged in single-use plastic items.
- Local authorities have been directed to issue fresh commercial licenses with the condition that SUP items will not be sold on their premises, and existing commercial licences will be cancelled if they are found to be selling these items.
- Recently, the CPCB issued one-time certificates to 200 manufacturers of compostable plastic and the BIS passed standards for biodegradable plastic.
- Those found violating the ban can be penalised under the Environment Protection Act 1986 – which allows for imprisonment up to 5 years, or a penalty up to Rs 1 lakh, or both. Violators can also be asked to pay **Environmental Damage Compensation** by the SPCB.
- In addition, there are municipal laws on plastic waste, with their own penal codes.

What are the challenges in enforcing these bans ?

- Past experiences show that a ban becomes successful only if all stakeholders participate enthusiastically and engage in effective engagement and concerted actions.
- Previously **almost 25 Indian States banned plastic** at the state level but these bans had a very limited impact in reality because of the widespread use of these items.
- Challenge is to see how the local level authorities will enforce the ban in accordance with the guidelines.
- Banned items such as earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, etc., are non-branded items and it is difficult to find out who the manufacturer is and who is accountable for selling because these items will be available in the market even after the issuing of guidelines.

Way forward:

- Government should start an awareness campaign to bring entrepreneurs and start-ups, industry, Central, State and local Governments, regulatory bodies, experts, citizen organizations, R&D and academic institutions together.
- Consumers need to be informed about the ban through advertisements, newspaper or TV commercials, or on social media.
- In order to find sustainable alternatives, companies need to invest in research and development.
- **Greener alternatives** to plastic may be considered a sustainable option. For example, compostable and biodegradable plastic, etc.
- Engagement of all stakeholders as the solution to the plastic pollution problem is not the responsibility of the government alone, but of industries, brands, manufacturers and most importantly consumers.

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