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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

**Date:** 23 February 2024

## REPORT ON PLASTIC WASTE POLLUTION

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "REPORT ON PLASTIC WASTE POLLUTION". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

A parliamentary panel has expressed worry over the country's inefficient plastic trash management, citing a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) study.

The panel chastised the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for its sluggish approach to addressing the issue and recommended the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change to enhance cooperation and take real action against plastic pollution.

### KEY FINDINGS OF THE PAC REPORT

The Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) report paints a picture of a plastic waste crisis brewing in India. While acknowledging the Ministry's efforts since 2021, it urges stronger action to shield citizens from its harmful effects.

- **Plastic Proliferation:** The report paints a stark picture – plastic waste generation has ballooned nearly threefold since 2015, reaching a staggering 41.2 lakh tonnes annually. This plastic tide threatens our environment, with half of it remaining unutilized, choking our air, water, and soil, and posing a silent threat to human health.
- **Data Darkness:** The report sheds light on another worrying aspect – a data gap. Many state pollution boards failed to report plastic waste generation between 2016 and 2018, leaving the Central Pollution Control Board in the dark. Even the data received wasn't always reliable, with inconsistencies arising between various bodies. This lack of transparency hinders effective management and masks the true extent of the problem.
- **Breaking Free from Plastic's Grip:** The report underlines the crucial need for alternatives. Finding "cost-effective and dependable" solutions to replace plastic is seen as the cornerstone of tackling this crisis. This call for innovation paves the way for exploring biodegradable materials, reusable alternatives, and improved waste management systems.
- While the report highlights the challenges, it also recognizes the efforts underway and the critical need for stronger action. **It's a call to action for policymakers, industries, and**

**individuals to work together in finding sustainable solutions and stemming the tide of plastic pollution before it engulfs us all.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS GIVEN BY THE PAC REPORT**

- **Data Deluge:** The report acknowledges the data gaps and demands a “reliable assessment” of plastic waste generation. Think of it as shining a light into the monster’s lair, exposing its true size and scope.
- **Bottom-Up approach:** The report proposes a “bottom-up approach,” where every block has a plastic waste recycling unit. Imagine a network of local heroes, each armed with a recycling unit, chipping away at the monster’s mass, one plastic bottle at a time.
- **Digital Dashboard Defense:** Mandatory online reporting on a national dashboard is the report’s proposed shield. Imagine a real-time map, constantly tracking the plastic beast’s movements, leaving nowhere to hide.
- **Industry Allies:** The report encourages industry participation, incentivizing them to set up local recycling units. Imagine these units as fortresses, manned by industry and waste pickers working together, offering a safe haven for used plastic and preventing it from rejoining the monster’s ranks.
- **Beyond the Banhammer:** The report recognizes the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy, but urges for more. Spreading awareness about eco-friendly alternatives and the dangers of single-use plastics are like shining a spotlight on the monster’s weaknesses. Funding research for alternatives is like forging powerful weapons, while holding implementing agencies accountable ensures they’re wielded effectively. Promoting recycled plastic and increasing recycling facilities are like building sturdy walls to contain the monster’s spread.
- **Industrial Eye:** The report calls for close vigilance on industries, ensuring they’re not making false claims about collection and recycling. Think of it as having watchful guards patrolling the monster’s perimeter, preventing any sneaky escapes.

### **INITIATIVES BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO CURB PLASTIC POLLUTION**

- **Ban on Single Use Plastic:** Numerous states in India have enforced a ban on the production, utilization, and trade of disposable plastics, encompassing items such as bags, cups, plates, cutlery, and straws.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** The Indian government has instituted the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), assigning the responsibility for the management and proper disposal of plastic waste generated by their products to plastic manufacturers.
- **Regulation of Plastic Waste:** In 2016, India introduced the **Plastic Waste Management Rules**, establishing a comprehensive framework for the effective management of plastic waste. The

rules encompass various measures, including initiatives for recycling and converting waste to energy.

- **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022:** It highlights the integration of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) guidelines with the prohibition of specific single-use plastic items. The amendment explicitly outlaws the manufacturing, importing, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic measuring less than seventy-five micrometers.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** In support of national cleanliness objectives, the Indian government initiated the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a campaign dedicated to cleanliness, including the systematic collection and appropriate disposal of plastic waste.

### PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

**Q1. Which type of plastic is generally NOT recyclable?**

- (a) PET (polyethylene terephthalate)
- (b) HDPE (high-density polyethylene)
- (c) PVC (polyvinyl chloride)
- (d) PP (polypropylene)

**Answer: (c)**

### MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

**Q1. Discuss the environmental consequences of plastic pollution, emphasizing the impact on marine ecosystems and wildlife. How does plastic contamination affect the delicate balance of marine life?**

**Himanshu Mishra**

