

Draft Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2021

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In News: The draft Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2021, issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on March 11, 2021.

About Draft Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2021

- Amendment has extended the applicability of the rules to brand-owner, plastic waste processor, including the recycler, co-processor, etc.
- Also include new definitions of:
 - Non-woven plastic bag
 - Plastic waste processing
 - Single-use plastic (SUP) item
 - Thermoset plastic
 - Thermoplastic
- The Ministry has proposed increasing the thickness of carry bags made of virgin plastic to 120 microns from 50 microns.
- Draft also proposes a ban on the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of specific single-use plastic from January 1, 2022.
 - These include plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, and thermocol (expanded polystyrene) for decoration.
- Draft is open for public suggestion for 60 days for consideration by the central government.

The draft is proposed to be implemented in three stages starting this year and culminating in mid-2022.

Stage I

- Propose that each sheet of non-woven plastic carry bag shall not be less than 60 (GSM per square metre) or 240 microns in thickness.
- A carry bag made of virgin or recycled plastic shall not be less than 120 microns, with effect from the same date.

Stage II

- Come into effect when six categories of single-use plastic – earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool) for decoration – will be banned for sale, use, manufacture, stocking, import and distribution.

Stage III

- List of banned items will grow to include single-use plastic plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping/packing films around sweet boxes; invitation cards; cigarette packets, plastic/PVC banners less than 100 micron and stirrers.

Local bodies and state pollution control boards will ensure the implementation and enforcement of these rules.

Plastic waste in India

- 3.3 million metric tonnes of plastic waste was generated in India in 2018-19, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report 2018-19.
- The total municipal solid waste generation is 55-65 million tonnes; plastic waste is approximately 5-6 percent of the total solid waste generated in the country.
- Goa has the highest per capita plastic waste generation at 60 grams per capita per day.
- The annual report was compiled based on submissions from

the state pollution control boards (SPCB), estimations of the report are substantially lower than the ones mentioned in the 2015 CPCB report on Assessment and quantification of Plastic Waste Generation in major Cities.

- Clearly, we do not know the amount of plastic we generate as a country, as the increase in wealth and affluence contributes to a higher generation of plastic waste.
- Despite the Plastic Waste Management legislation of 2011, followed by numerous changes, most parts of the country lack systematic efforts required to mitigate the risks associated with plastic waste.
- The states started providing data on the same only in 2018-19 for the first time.

The problem about Plastic Recycling

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in its 2019 report titled Good news from India claimed that India recycles over 60 per cent of its plastic, which was way higher than the recycling capacity of any developed country.
- Only nine per cent of the plastic waste produced between 1950 and 2015 was recycled globally.
- Out of the nine per cent, only 10 per cent was recycled more than once; 12 per cent was incinerated, and 79 per cent ended up in landfills or oceans and other water bodies.
- There are reports suggesting a huge gap between the demand and supply of plastics; we are being sold plastics at a much higher rate than we need.
- Recycling is a rather benign word used by plastic manufacturers. Most plastics that we claim can be recycled in India are rather down-cycled to some other material. A classic example is that of PET bottles being recycled to t-shirts.

- Some are incinerated and others are used for co-processing or road making. These processes can never be termed recycling, since they are not closing the loop on the circularity of the product.