

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION No. 372
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.04.2023

Hazardous effects of plastic on environment and human life

*372. SHRI S. SELVAGANABATHY:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of large-scale use of plastic in packaging industry and its hazardous effects on the environment and human life, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the action proposed by Government to reduce use of plastic in packaging of water and food items due to difficulties in recycling them;
- (c) whether Government proposes to impose restrictions on packaging industry to stop the use of plastic and suggest appropriate alternative material in the packaging of food and water and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Government has undertaken adequate research and development to identify an alternative to plastic?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

- (a) to (d): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) to (d) of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 372 to be answered on 6th April, 2023 on “Hazardous effects of plastic on environment and human life” by Shri S. Selvaganabathy, Hon’ble Member of Parliament.

(a): Unmanaged and littered plastic waste including plastic packaging waste has adverse impacts on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. As per Annual Report of CPCB for the year 2019-20, the plastic waste generation in the country has 34.69 lakh tonnes per annum (TPA) during the year 2019-20 of which approximately 15.8 Lakh TPA of plastic waste was recycled and 1.67 Lakh TPA was co-processed in cement kilns.

As per the Guidelines on Extended Producer Responsibility for Plastic Packaging notified on 16th February 2022, presently a total of 6792 of Producers, Importers and Brand Owners have been registered on the Centralized Online Extended Producer Responsibility Portal on Plastic Packaging. The registered PIBOs cumulatively have around 2.39 Million Tons of plastic packaging covered under Extended Producer Responsibility for the year 2022-23.

(b) & (c): The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018, which prescribes general and specific requirements for different food packaging materials including plastics. These regulations also specify that paper, glass, metals and plastic materials, if used for packaging food stuffs, shall be manufactured in accordance to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and various national/international standards. Further, packaging material of plastic origin, is required to meet the prescribed overall migration limits and specific migration limits.

Following regulatory measures have been taken by FSSAI to enable Food and Beverage industry to reduce their plastic foot print:- (i) issued guidelines for use of bamboo as food contact material; (ii) allowed serving of drinking water in paper-sealed reusable glass bottles for captive use within the hotel premises subject to certain conditions; (iii) removed the restriction on use of returnable bottles for packaging of artificially sweetened beverages; (iv) permitted the use of liquid nitrogen dosing in PET bottles during the packaging of drinking water; (v) permitted the use of other food grade packaging materials for packaging of drinking water other than plastics that are used currently; (vi) promoted bio degradable packaging as part of Eat Right India initiative and encouraged Food Business to reduce use of plastics.

The EPR guidelines on plastic packaging mandate the reuse of rigid plastic packaging, subject to the regulations as prescribed by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India for food contact applications. The EPR guidelines also promote sustainable plastic packaging thus reducing the plastic foot print.

(d): The Department of Science and Technology and Department of Biotechnology support research and development projects for alternatives to banned single-use plastic items, as per scheme guidelines. The School of Advanced Research in Petrochemicals (SARP), CIPET is working on eco-friendly alternatives to banned single use plastic items. Further, to encourage innovation in development of alternatives to banned identified single use plastic items and digital solutions to plastic waste management, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had organized an India Plastic Challenge – Hackathon 2021, for students of higher education institutions and start-ups.

A National Expo on eco-alternatives to banned single use plastics items and Conference of Startups - 2022 was organized jointly with Government of Tamil Nadu in Chennai on 26-27th September 2022 to raise awareness on alternatives. More than 150 manufacturers of eco-alternatives from across the country participated in the Expo. The Eco-alternatives were made from coir, bagasse, rice and wheat bran, plant and agricultural residue, banana and areca leaves, jute and cloth. The details of the manufacturers making Eco-alternatives is available at http://suppwmdashboard.in/sup_dashboard/dashboard_details/lists/whats_new/2.
