

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 551
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24.07.2023

Ban on Plastic Items

551. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI:
SHRI MANOJ TIWARI:
DR. NISHIKANT DUBEY:

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to phase out all plastic/polythene items in the coming years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons there for along with the time-frame for complete phase out of all plastic items to achieve the target of total ban on plastic;
- (c) whether the Government is aware that use of plastic packaging is becoming increasingly prevalent in spite of ban on it;
- (d) if so, the details of the quantity of plastic packaging that has been used and banned plastic material seized in the last three years, year-wise;
- (e) whether plastic packaging used for packing food of certain quality is harmful to the environment and human health and if so, the steps being taken by the Government to discourage the same;
- (f) whether any restriction has been imposed on industry regarding use of plastic as packaging material; and
- (g) whether the Government has launched any awareness campaign to make the general public aware of its disadvantages and if so, the results thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) & (b): The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, on 12th August 2021, prohibiting manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of the following identified single use plastic items, which have low utility and high littering potential with effect from 1st July, 2022:

- (i) ear buds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene [Thermocol] for decoration;
- (ii) plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers.

The notification also prohibits manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of plastic carry bags having thickness less than thickness of one hundred and twenty microns with effect from the 31st December, 2022.

The single use plastic items prohibited with effect from 1st July 2022 have been identified based upon recommendation of an Expert Committee constituted by Department of Chemical and Petrochemicals, Government of India on single use plastics.

(c) & (d): Plastic packaging is covered under Guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility on Plastic Packaging. Further, the sachets using plastic material for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala and wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, are banned under Plastic Waste Management Rules.

(e) to (g): The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India lays down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import, to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. 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 and various national/international standards. Further, packaging material of plastic origin, is required to pass 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 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. Further, to develop alternatives to banned single use plastics the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organized, “India Plastic Challenge – Hackathon 2021” for start-ups and students of colleges and Universities. Two startups which developed alternative packaging material were awarded. One start up developed a completely biodegradable alternative to thermocol from paddy straw waste. The other startup developed packaging material using seaweeds.

The Union Government through various central ministries and government agencies has been involved in generating public awareness on plastic waste management and elimination of single-use plastics. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had launched

Prakriti – Mascot on 5th April 2022. Three videos of PRAKRITI have been made on elimination of single use plastics. These videos have been translated in 19 languages and have been shared with States and UTs for further dissemination. A dedicated webpage with all awareness material has been created for making available all information materials and videos for wider dissemination and use by stakeholders. A National Expo on eco-alternatives to banned single use plastics items and Conference of Startups - 2022 were organized jointly with Government of Tamil Nadu in Chennai on 26-27th September 2022. 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.
