

National Policy Workshop Webinar Series
On
Countermeasures for Riverine and Marine Plastic Litter in India
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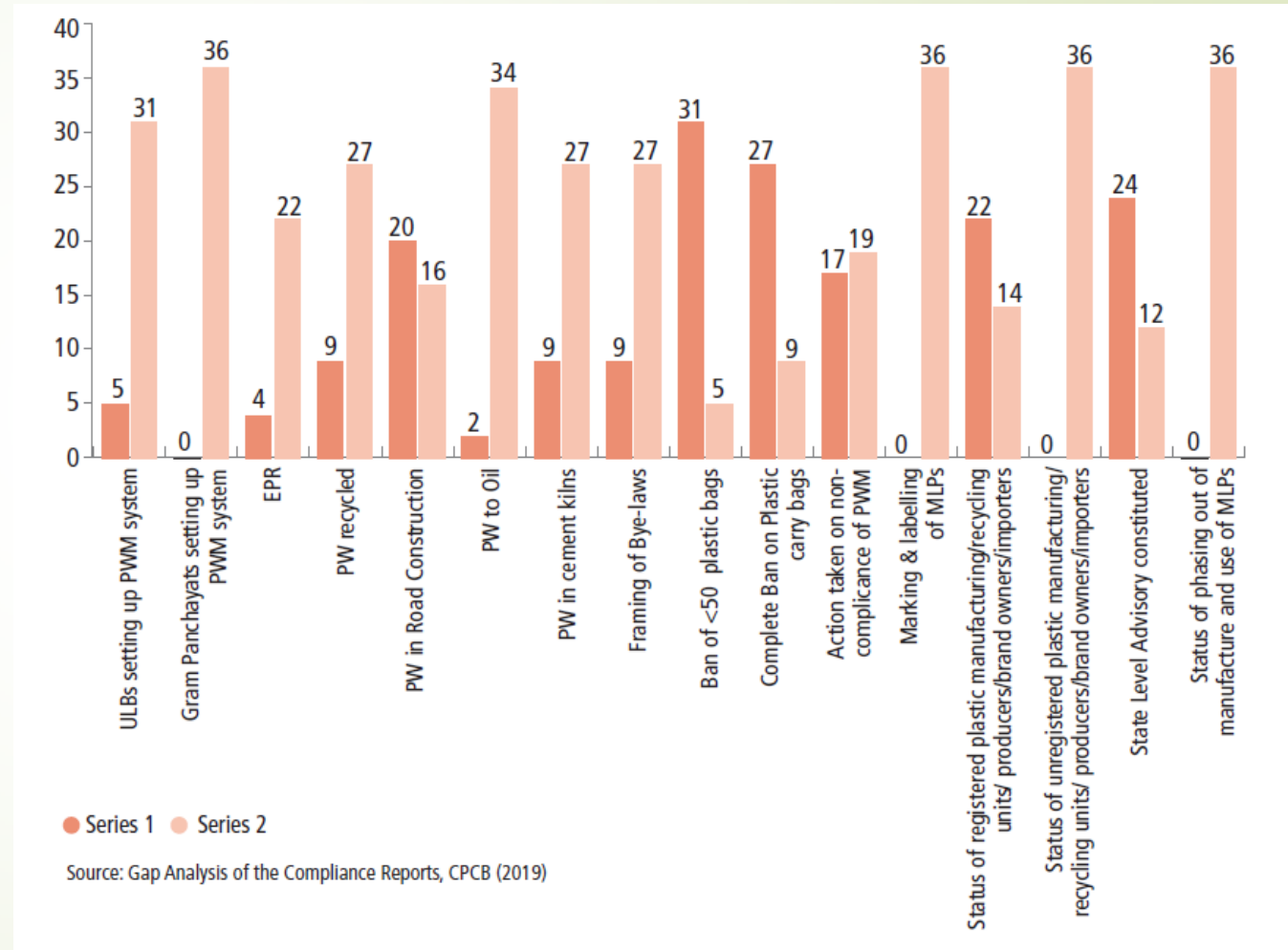
Session 6: Scenarios to counter plastics litter in river and marine environment by overcoming barriers and identifying enabling measures and shaping roadmap and strategy ahead

Effectiveness of single use plastic bans in India and proposed national policy recommendations

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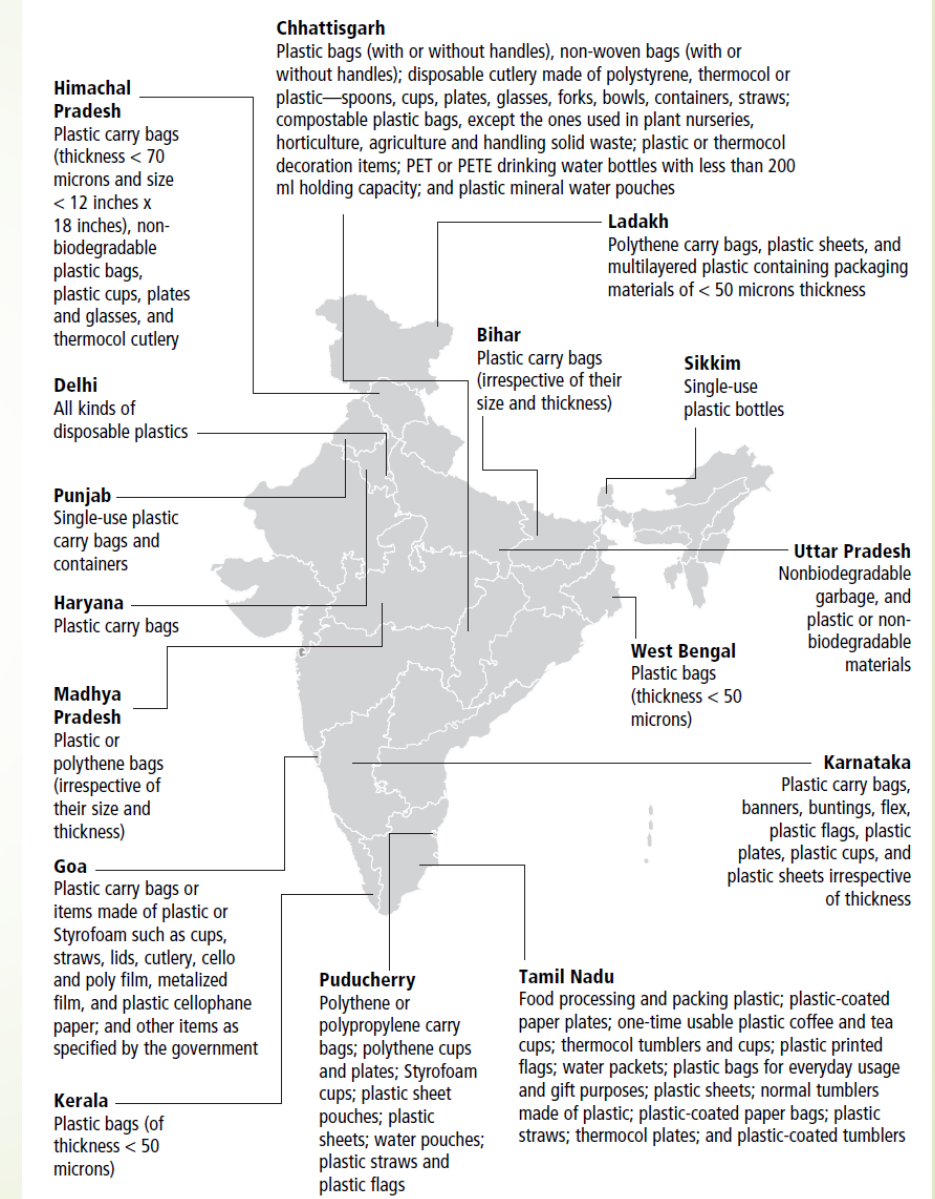
CPCB Gap Analysis 2019 reports inadequacy in implementation of PWM Rules, 2016

- Central Pollution Control Board has recently remarked that states and UTs are not furnishing adequate information
- ✓ regarding plastic waste generation records, creation of
- ✓ state-level advisory bodies,
- ✓ framing of bye-laws,
- ✓ Marking and labelling of multi-layered plastic,
- ✓ the number of plastic manufacturing and recycling units within their jurisdiction.
- The board also rued the fact that there is dearth of concrete preventive and regulatory measures as envisaged under Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.



Status of plastic bans in India

- More than 20 states have notified a full or partial ban on SUP, Maharashtra being the first.
- Some states like Telangana, UP, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh banned plastic bottles and Tetra packs, single-use straws, plastic/Styrofoam tea cups/containers, etc.
- But many like Bihar or Nagaland banned only polythene bags.
- Maharashtra has classified SUPs into three categories—products that are banned, those allowed with EPR and those that are exempted.
 - ✓ It has banned plastic carry-bags, plastic & thermocol cutlery and dish/bowl used to package food in hotels, non-woven polypropylene bags, pouches for liquids and decorative materials made from plastics and thermocol.
 - ✓ For other SUPs, it has prescribed buy-back schemes as part of the Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) of companies. It exempts plastic used for packaging medicines.
 - ✓ Also, it has allowed the use of compostable plastics for nurseries, horticulture, agriculture and handling of solid waste.



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- ▶ Odisha has also categorised SUP products into three categories, like Maharashtra.
 - ✓ It has banned carry-bags, bottled water of less than 200 ml volume, disposable cutlery made of thermocol and plastics and decorative materials made of thermocol.
 - ✓ It has exempted plastics used in nurseries, horticulture, agriculture and health sector and those used for packaging of milk and milk products. It has imposed EPR on PET bottles. Interestingly, Odisha has applied this regulation to only major cities.
- ▶ Tamil Nadu has categorised SUPs into two categories—products that are banned and products that are exempted. The items included by the state are quite specific and don't figure in the list of other states.
 - ✓ It has banned plastic flags, plastic sheets used for spreading on the dining table and plastic coated teacups.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu has given exemptions to plastics used for forestry and horticulture nurseries and packaging of milk and milk products, oil, medicine and medical equipment.
- ▶ Uttar Pradesh has only one category of SUPs—products that are banned. Its list of banned products includes all kinds of carry-bags and disposable cutleries. This ban is only enforceable in urban and industrial areas.

As one can see, there is a vast difference in how states have categorised SUPs.



Challenges associated with the ban in Indian States

Lack of efforts from administration to implement the ban-There has been little action to stop plastic bag manufacturing or transport. Also, administration has not taken any action to stop vendors to dole out plastic bags or to penalize consumers who are taking the banned bags. Even in cases where there has been action, it is for limited time- which meant that the bags vanished from the market for a while, but came back soon.

Non- availability of alternatives- There has been very little effort to ensure availability of other materials. Also, lack of support to alternative industry means that they are relatively expensive and hence consumers or vendors do not prefer it.

Low Public participation-Community interest and involvement is of paramount importance when it comes to successful implementation of any environmental initiative. Government has failed to initiate behaviour change, though it has been able to create awareness at many levels.

Stiff resistance from the Plastic industry: For example, in case of Delhi, the ban was challenged in the court and could not be implemented. In case of bans on single use plastic as well, similar problems have surfaced. The All India Plastic Manufacturers Association contends the ban in Maharashtra has cost manufacturers millions of dollars and tens of thousands of workers their jobs, and the Tamil Nadu Plastics Manufacturing Association has challenged the Tamil Nadu ban in court.

Bigger Challenge

- ▶ Will single use plastics progress continue or reverse? – bag bans/levies, home delivery, stocking and hoarding food in the current lockdown period; including rising use of disposable PPEs



Recommendations

- **1. List and define SUPs:** List and define single use plastics: It is important to identify the most problematic SUP items and assess the extent of their impacts before imposing bans. A clear definition of SUPs in the Indian context is needed.
- **2. Phase-wise plan and national classification of SUPs:** Need for a national action plan or guidelines for phase-wise banning of plastic items. Plastic items should be classified on the basis of material qualities, recyclability, availability of alternatives, and livelihood security of the informal sector working with them. We could define SUPs into four major categories
 - **Category 1:** Products that should be banned; these include all kinds of carry-bags, disposable cutleries, straws, pouches for liquids and small bottled water, decorative materials and flags, etc.
 - **Category 2:** Products that can be brought under buy-back EPR scheme; These include PET/PETE bottles, plastic packaging used by hotels and takeaways, milk pouches and food packaging of more than 50-micron thickness, big plastic bottles of body care products and medicines, etc.
 - **Category 3:** Products that can come under non-buy-back EPR scheme; these can include multi-layered plastics, small sachets and bottles , etc. Companies producing these products will have to work with local authorities to ensure maximum recovery and recycling/end-use of these products.
 - **Category 4:** Products that can be exempted, these include compostable plastics, plastics used in nurseries, horticulture, agriculture and health sector.
- **3. Incentivise effective waste management with focus on segregation, collection and recycling:** If cities segregate waste into three fractions – wet, dry, and domestic hazardous waste – and if municipalities create infrastructure such as material recovery facilities and sorting stations, dry waste can be sorted into different fractions. Once waste has been segregated properly, it has value and there is a market for the different fractions. We need to source segregate end-to-end. In addition, legislative bodies in every state and UT must explore and formulate plans regarding the establishment and monitoring of domestic recycling units; incentivise recyclers in the unorganised sector; train low-skilled recyclers; set up effective grievance redressal mechanisms; and perform lifecycle and cost analysis of plastic alternatives.



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- ▶ **4. Effective implementation of EPR:** It is pertinent to note that companies are getting together and setting up their own plastic waste collection and recycling schemes for items that have a high recycling value (of about 90 per cent, such as PET bottles), but an approach that integrates the industrial sector with the informal sector and ULBs would lead to better implementation of EPR.
- ▶ **5. Design and circular innovations:** The government should invest money in and encourage setting up of ventures that provide sustainable products as an alternative to the nonrecyclable products in vogue at present. It should accelerate business-driven innovations and help scale circular economies that focus on systemic stalemates in global material flows so that the need for disposal of materials is delayed.

Suggested readings and research:

- <https://www.deccanherald.com/specials/sunday-spotlight/can-india-kick-the-plastic-habit-761476.html>
- <https://citizenmatters.in/managing-bio-medical-waste-during-the-covid-19-times-17672>
- <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/waste/no-plastic-ban-what-it-means-for-india--67068>
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZPLoBhWNyg>



Thank You

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