

Government rolls out draft rules to control use of plastics

The increasing use of plastic products in our daily life and its impact on environment sustainability has prompted governments across the world to control or prohibit manufacture and use of these products. So far, around 170 countries have resolved to reduce use of plastics by 2030 and many countries have introduced rules to restrict manufacture and sale of these products. European Union plans to prohibit use of single use plastic by 2021, while China decided to ban use of non-degradable bags by 2022. Even though the federal government of USA has not passed any law in this regard, some states such as California, Hawaii and New York have banned single use plastic bags.

Banning the use of single use plastics is one solution to control pollution arising from plastics. Another solution is to create a circular economy that focuses on reuse, recycle and reduce usage of plastics. Globally, policymakers are devising strategies to create a circular economy around plastics, under which all the plastic products are circulated after use to avoid being discarded on landfills or waterways, which contaminates the environment. According to a UN estimate, the environmental cost of discarding plastic in land and water bodies is pegged at USD 75 billion, in terms of environmental degradation and damage to marine life and ecosystem. India is said to be recycling around 60% of its annual plastic waste, which puts the country in the top 25% nations that recycle plastic waste.

Government of India has realized the importance of deterrent policy measures with Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing resolve to ban single use plastics by 2022. Government of India notified Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 to minimize generation of plastic waste and ensure safe management of the waste. In order to take tighten measures on this issue, India's environment ministry introduced draft Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2021 on March 12, 2021. These rules will be implemented in a staggered manner in three stages from the current year upto 2022. Under the first stage, the government has banned plastic carry bags of less than 240 microns in thickness from September 30, 2021. In the second stage, the government will prohibit the use of six categories of single use plastics, viz. earbuds with plastic sticks, ice cream sticks, candy sticks, thermocol for decoration, plastic flags and plastic sticks for balloons.

The government will roll out the third stage of this rule by prohibiting manufacture and use of cups and kitchenware such as single use plastic plates, knives, spoons, forks, trays etc. The government is awaiting public feedback to release final notification on these rules. The government has exempted carry bags and other products made of compostable plastic materials from the above rules.

In the past, several state governments such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh banned use of single use plastics in their states. Sikkim is said to be the first state to ban plastic bags way back in 1997. In October 2019, Government of Himachal Pradesh introduced a law policy to buy back non-recyclable and single use plastic waste from rag pickers and households. Gover

According to media reports, there are more than 50,000 plastic product manufacturers in India and the ban on single use plastics will affect around 10,000 manufacturing units, causing loss of jobs to at least 3

lakh people. Therefore, there is a need to develop sustainable business model and employment opportunities in recycling and alternative eco-friendly packaging products such as jute, bamboo and natural fibre cloth.

Notifications

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