

Centre writes to States to phase out Single Use Plastic (SUP);

MoHUA launches “Clean and Green” campaign on World Environment Day

Posted On: 04 JUN 2022 2:53PM by PIB Delhi

Come 5th June 2022 - World Environment Day - States/ UTs and Urban Local Bodies across the country will swing into campaign mode, in a bid to make the country free of single use plastic (SUP), as well as contribute to improving the environment, under the overarching mandate of “**Clean and Green**”. This comes on the heels of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s 89th Mann Ki Baat address to the nation on 29th May 2022, where he exhorted citizens to join together and make some efforts for cleanliness and tree plantation on the occasion of World Environment Day,

Given the dual mandate of World Environment Day and India’s committed ban of SUP by 30th June 2022, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has issued a detailed advisory to States and UTs to take up a range of activities to fulfil these mandates. These will include large scale cleaning and plogging drives, with special emphasis on plastic waste collection, as well as large scale tree plantation drives, with participation of all citizens – students, voluntary organisations, self-help groups, local NGOs/CSOs, NSS and NCC cadets, RWAs, market associations, corporate entities, etc.

The advisory for enforcing the committed nation-wide SUP ban encompasses a plethora of suggested initiatives. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0, currently being implemented by MoHUA, plastic waste management, including elimination of SUP - is a crucial area of focus. Under the Mission, every ULB is required to adopt 100% source segregation of waste, and have access to a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) for sorting the dry waste (including plastic waste) into further fractions for recycling and/ or processing into value added products, thereby reducing to a minimum the amount of plastic and dry waste ending up in dumpsites or waterbodies.

While 2,591 ULBs (out of 4,704) have already reported notification SUP ban as per the directions of Central Pollution Control Board and MoEF&CC, States/ UTs will need to ensure that the remaining 2,100-plus ULBs notify the same by 30th June, 2022. ULBs will need to identify SUP ‘hotspots’ and eliminate them, while parallelly leveraging the support of State Pollution Control Boards and forming special enforcement squads, conducting surprise inspections and imposing heavy fines and penalties on defaulters, for enforcing SUP bans.

As per PWM (Amended) Rules, 2021, the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic less than seventy-five microns (75 μ i.e. 0.075 mm in thickness) has been banned with effect from 30th September, 2021 as opposed to fifty microns (50 μ) recommended earlier under PWM Rules, 2016. As a consequence of this new provision, citizens are now encouraged to desist from using thin plastic carry bags provided by street vendors, local shopkeepers, vegetable sellers etc. and use alternative options.

In accordance with the PWM (Amended) Rules, 2021 a range of complementary initiatives will also be taken up to strengthen enforcement. ULBs will need to identify SUP-alternatives (such as cloth/jute/plastic bags, degradable cutleries, etc.) readily available in the market and create awareness about such alternatives among citizens. Corporate entities, dealing with bottled drinks may be requested to set up *Bottle Banks* (where users can get paid for dropping off PET bottles), and also set up subsidized reusable plastic bottle booths at different

locations, as part of their Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR) mandates. Alongside, ULBs may establish *Thaila* (bag)/*Bartan* (Utensils) kiosks or *bhandars* to provide citizens with alternatives to SUP, especially for use in public meetings and festivals, thereby helping to reduce SUP consumption. These initiatives may be strengthened through 'swachhata raths' to be deployed in all public places, markets, and other high footfall areas to spread awareness against use of SUP and for availing SUP-alternatives.

States & ULBs have also been advised to enter into MoUs with nearby cement plants or other industrial units as well to ensure that a part of the plastic waste generated is used either as alternative fuel in cement plants, or for road construction purposes. For the latter purpose, ULBs or their Public Works Departments will need to come out with detailed guidelines for use of SUPs/multi-layered plastics in road construction.

Most importantly, the advisory stresses on large scale people participation, where all citizen categories –elected representatives such as Mayors and ward councillors, voluntary organisations, local NGOs/ CSOs, Residents' Welfare Associations, market associations, self-help groups, students and youth groups etc, are to be identified and engaged with, to carry forward the message of SUP ban and enforcement. ULBs may also encourage citizens to take pledges to not litter plastic and prevent plastics getting into landfills, alongwith reward campaigns to publicise good disposal behavior in media or social networks to encourage others to stop SUP usage.

All these initiatives are to be recorded by States/ UTs and ULBs through a detailed protocol for documentation and reporting for monitoring at the highest levels.

Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban, being implemented by MoHUA, is committed to create “Garbage Free Cities” through comprehensive sanitation and waste management measures in all statutory towns in the country.

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(Release ID: 1831098)