

Centre writes to states to phase out single use plastic

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The union ministry of housing & urban affairs (MoHUA) has issued a detailed advisory to states and union territories to take up a range of activities in a bid to enforce the nation-wide ban on single use plastic.

The steps would 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 among others.

“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,” said a statement from the ministry.

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 urban local body (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 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.

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.

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“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,” it said.