

STATUS OF MARINE LITTER IN THE COUNTRY

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Various studies have been conducted covering Nine Coastal States, and UT's Puducherry, Andaman & Nicobar & Lakshadweep Islands.

- i. During 2018, 2019, and 2021 National Centre for Coastal Research an attached office of the Ministry has undertaken beach clean-up activities, awareness programs at regular intervals, and beach litter quantification studies.
- ii. The studies on the effect of various beach activities on marine litter and microplastics distribution & characterization were also carried out at selected beaches along the southeast coast of India.
- iii. Micro-plastic studies in the coastal water and offshore sediment were carried out along the east coast of India to identify major plastic accumulation zones and the data has been published in International journals.

Following steps have been initiated for the formulation of the National Marine Litter Policy.

- i. As there is a dearth of data on marine litter sources, pathways, transport processes, and quantification of the amount of litter entering the marine environment, several studies have been undertaken to map the litter which is an important component for the Policy paper. Ministry of Earth Sciences through its attached office National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), has initiated monitoring of temporal and spatial distribution of marine litter along the Indian coasts and adjacent seas. The research so far indicates that Marine Litter is spread along entire water column and sediment and high quantities are noticed during monsoon due to its spread into coastal water through creeks/rivers/estuaries by rainwater.
- ii. In addition, several National level workshops have been conducted involving scientists from different research institutes, stakeholders, policymakers, industry and academic experts to prepare a roadmap for formulating the National Marine litter Policy.
- iii. Moreover, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, and its amendments, which provide the statutory framework for plastic waste management in the country. The Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2016, prohibits manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags and plastic sheets less than fifty microns in thickness in the country. There is complete ban on sachets using plastic material used for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala. MoEF&CC had also issued "Standard Guidelines for Single-Use Plastic" on 21st January 2019 to all States/UTs and Ministries. Further, the Government of India has initiated several programmes such as "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan", National Mission for Clean Ganga and Smart Cities Mission" in order to develop clean and sustainable environment which contribute towards the Marine Litter Policy.

The various categories of waste found on the shores of the coastal states are in the order of: -

- i. Plastics- Single use of Plastics i.e., Bottles, food Wrappers, Cutlery items, polythene bags,
- ii. Fishing nets,

- iii. Glass – Liquor bottles,
- iv. Rubber- footwears
- v. Clothes- Face masks and religious activities
- vi. Paper,
- vii. Metals and
- viii. Miscellaneous items – diapers and household materials.

Some of the steps taken by Government in the last four years to mitigate the harmful impacts of marine litter on ecology of coastal states are:

- (i) Regular beach clean-up and awareness programs at the national level are being conducted involving school, college, and University students, research institutes, and NGOs.
- ii. At regular intervals, webinars are being conducted and the level of marine pollution is disseminated through print media to sensitize the people about the ill effects of plastic/marine litter on the marine environment.
- iii. A framework for a clean ocean mission (Swachhata Sagar), as a component of the “Swachhata Action Plan”, has been prepared through the Ministry of Earth Sciences research institutions.
- iv. To understand the effect of different types of polymers (microplastics) on fisheries, and biota, research has been undertaken to estimate the level of contamination
- v. Ban on the usage of Identified single-use plastics has been notified by the central government and several state governments have already implemented the same to mitigate the harmful impacts of marine litter.

This information was given by the Minister of State (I/C) for M/o Earth Sciences and M/o Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

SNC/RR

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