



Concerns Raised on Plastic Waste Pollution

For Prelims: [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#), [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#), [Public Accounts Committee \(PAC\)](#), [Plastic Waste, Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\) Rules, Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016](#).

For Mains: Plastic Waste Pollution and Its Implication of Environment and Human Health.

Source: [TOI](#)

Why in News?

Recently, A parliamentary panel raised concerns over the ineffective handling of plastic waste in the country, citing a report from the [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#).

- The panel criticised the [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#) for its lax approach to addressing the issue and urged the **Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change** to improve coordination and take concrete steps to combat plastic pollution.

What is the Finding of the PAC Report?

- **Acknowledgment of Ministry's Efforts:** The [Public Accounts Committee \(PAC\)](#) acknowledged the Ministry's efforts on **plastic waste** since May 2021 but stressed the need for more effective measures to protect people from plastic pollution hazards.
- **Increasing Plastic Waste Generation:** Plastic waste generation has increased substantially from 15.9 lakh tonnes per annum (TPA) in 2015-16 to 41.2 lakh TPA in 2020-21.
- **Unutilized Plastic Waste and Environmental Impact:** Data from 2019-20 shows that **50% of the total plastic waste** in the country (34.7 lakh TPA) **remained unutilised**, leading it to pollute air, water and soil, and ultimately affecting human health.
- **Data Gap and Inconsistencies:** The **PAC** noted a big data gap, observing from **CAG's** 2022 audit findings that many [State Pollution Control Boards \(SPCBs\)](#) did not provide data on plastic waste generation for the period 2016-18 to the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
 - It also noted that data received from **SPCBs** was not validated by **CPCB** and in certain cases, there were inconsistencies in data shared by [Urban Local Bodies \(ULBs\)](#) with SPCBs.
- **Importance of Finding Alternatives to Plastic:** It observed that "finding a cost-effective and dependable alternative to plastic" was a prerequisite for its elimination.

What are the Measures Taken to Curb Plastic Pollution?

- **Measures Taken at Global Level:**
 - **Resolution to End Plastic Pollution:**
 - In 2022, 124 countries, parties to the [United Nations Environment Assembly](#), including India, signed a resolution to draw up a **legally binding** agreement for an **end to plastic pollution**.

- **Closing the loop:**
 - It is a project of the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#) to assist cities in developing more inventive policy solutions to tackle the problem.
- **The Global Tourism Plastics initiative:**
 - It aims to reduce plastic pollution from the tourism sector through a set of actionable commitments by **2025**.
- **European Union:**
 - In July 2021, the **Directive on Single-Use Plastics** took effect in the [European Union \(EU\)](#).
- **Measures taken by Indian Government:**
 - **Ban on Hard-to-Collect/Recycle Single-Use Plastics (SUP):** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had banned hard-to-collect/recycle, [Single-Use Plastic \(SUP\)](#) items.
 - The manufacturing, importation, sale, and **usage of plastic carry bags thinner than 120 microns** were prohibited.
 - The [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2022](#), introduce guidelines on **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for plastic packaging.
 - These guidelines set mandatory targets for **EPR**, recycling of plastic packaging waste, reuse of rigid plastic packaging, and the use of recycled plastic content.
 - **Local Body Responsibility:** [Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016](#) state that every local body has to be responsible for setting up infrastructure for **segregation**, collection, processing, and disposal of plastic waste.
 - **Other Important Initiatives:**
 - [National Dashboard on Elimination of Single-Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management](#)
 - [India Plastics Pact](#)
 - [Project REPLAN](#)
 - [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#)

What are the Recommendations of the PAC Report?

- **Importance of Reliable Data Assessment:** Underlining gaps in data, the panel expressed the need to have a "**reliable assessment**" of the amount of plastic waste being generated and it should be the first step towards managing the problem efficiently.
- **Mandatory Reporting on National Dashboard:** It recommended "mandatory" reporting of data online on the national dashboard.
- **Urgent and Effective Measures for Enforcement:** Immediate and effective steps, in addition to **EPR**, including spreading awareness about eco-friendly alternatives and ill-effects of SUP, providing funds for R&D on finding alternatives, making implementing agencies accountable, promoting use of recycled plastic content and increasing recycling facilities may be taken to "efficiently enforce the ban on SUP on ground".
- **Vigilance over Industrial Practices:** There is a need to keep a close watch on industries to see whether they actually do require collection and recycling or instead make false claims.
- **Embracing a Bottom-Up Approach:** There is also a need to adopt a **bottom-up approach** where every block in the country should have at least one plastic waste recycling unit.
- **Encouraging Industry Participation:** Industries or private entities should be incentivised to set up such units at local levels and they should, in turn, work closely with waste pickers through effective remunerative measures.

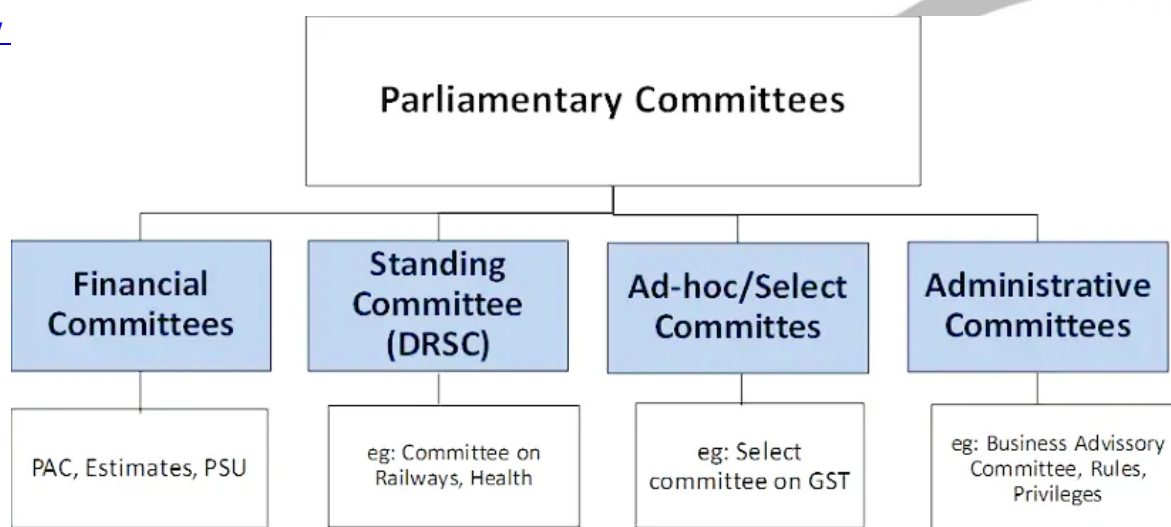
CPCB

- The [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#), is a statutory organisation, was constituted in **1974** under the [Water \(Prevention and Control of Pollution\) Act, 1974](#).
- **CPCB** was also entrusted with the powers and functions under the [Air \(Prevention and Control of Pollution\) Act, 1981](#).
- It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the **Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate change** of the provisions of the [Environment \(Protection\) Act, 1986](#).

Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

- **PAC** is one of the three **Financial Parliamentary committees**, the other two are the **Estimates Committee** and the **Committee on Public Undertakings**.
- Parliamentary committees draw their authority from **Article 105** (on privileges of Parliament members) and **Article 118** (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).
- **Establishment:**
 - The **Public Accounts Committee** was introduced in **1921** after its first mention in the **Government of India Act, 1919** also called **Montford Reforms**.
 - The Public Accounts Committee is now constituted every year under Rule 308 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in **Lok Sabha**.
- **Appointment:**
 - The **Chairman** of the Committee is appointed by the **Speaker of Lok Sabha**.
 - It is to be noted that the Committee, not being an executive body, can only make decisions that are advisory by nature.
- **Members:**
 - It presently comprises **22 members** (15 members elected by the **Lok Sabha Speaker**, and **7 members** elected by the **Rajya Sabha Chairman** with a term of **one year only**).

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What is EPR?

- It makes **producers responsible for the environmental impacts** of their products throughout their life cycle.
- EPR aims to promote better waste management and reduce the burden on municipalities.
- It integrates environmental costs into product prices and encourages the design of environmentally sound products.
- EPR applies to various types of waste, including plastic waste, e-waste, and battery waste.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q.1 In India, 'extend producer responsibility' was introduced as an important feature in which of the following? (2019)

- (a) The Bio-medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1998**

- (b) The Recycled Plastic (Manufacturing and Usage) Rules, 1999
- (c) The e-Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011
- (d) The Food Safety and Standard Regulations, 2011

Ans: (c)

Q.2 How is the National Green Tribunal (NGT) different from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)? (2018)

1. The NGT has been established by an Act whereas the CPCB has been created by an executive order of the Government.
2. The NGT provides environmental justice and helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts whereas the CPCB promotes cleanliness of streams and wells, and aims to improve the quality of air in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/concerns-raised-on-plastic-waste-pollution>

