

PM launches year-long 125th birth anniversary celebration of Alluri Sitarama Raju (GS Paper 1, Modern India)

Why in news?

- Recently, the Prime Minister launched the year-long 125th birth anniversary celebration of legendary freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju in Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh.

Details:

- He unveiled a 30-foot-tall bronze statue of Alluri Sitharama Raju at Bhimavaram in Andhra Pradesh.
- He informed that the 125th birth anniversary of Alluri Sitarama Raju Garu and the 100th anniversary of Rampa Kranti will be celebrated throughout the year.



Alluri Sitharama Raju:

- Born on 4th July 1897, Alluri Sitarama Raju is remembered for his fight against the British, in order to safeguard the interests of the tribal communities in the Eastern Ghats region.
- He had led the Rampa rebellion, which was launched in 1922. He is referred to as “Manyam Veerudu” (Hero of the Jungles) by the local people.

Struggle against British:

- At a very young age, Raju channelled the discontent of the hill people in Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, and Godavari into a highly effective guerrilla resistance against the British.
- Colonial rule threatened the tribals’ traditional podu (shifting) cultivation, as the government sought to secure forest lands. The **Forest Act of 1882 banned the collection** of minor forest produce such as roots and leaves, and tribal people were forced into labour for the colonial government.
- While the tribals were subjected to exploitation by muttadars, village headmen commissioned by the colonial government to extract rent, the new laws and systems threatened their way of life itself.

Rampa or Manyam Rebellion:

- Strong anti-government sentiment, shared by the muttadars who were aggrieved by the curtailment of their powers by the British, exploded into armed resistance in August 1922.
- Several hundred tribals led by Raju attacked the Chintapalle, Krishnadevipeta and Rajavommangi police stations in the Godavari agency.
- The Rampa or Manyam Rebellion continued in the form of a guerrilla war until May 1924, when Raju, the charismatic ‘Manyam Veerudu’ or Hero of Jungle, was finally captured and executed.

- The Rampa Rebellion **coincided with Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement.**

Presence in culture:

- In 1986, the Indian Postal Department issued a stamp in honour of Raju and his contribution to India's struggle for Independence.
- He has long been a folk hero in the region, and the 1974 Telugu film Alluri Seetarama Raju, featuring actor Krishna, became very popular.
- S S Rajamouli's 2022 Telugu blockbuster RRR is a fictional account of the friendship between Raju and tribal leader Komaram Bheem, with actor Ram Charan portraying Raju's role.

Political claims:

- In July 2019, on the occasion of Raju's 122nd birth anniversary, the government of Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the naming of a district after the legendary freedom fighter, acceding to a long-standing demand of the tribal population of Andhra Pradesh.
- The district of Alluri Sitharama Raju came into being on April 4, 2022, made up of Paderu and Rampachodavaram of the existing districts of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari respectively.
- These two areas have tribal populations of 10.4 per cent and 4.1 per cent, according to a May 2014 estimate by the Andhra Pradesh government.

India needs to scale up direct nutrition interventions

(GS Paper 2, Health)

Context:

- As India launches the celebrations of its 75th anniversary of Independence, there is much to be proud about; significant advances have been made in science, technology, and medicine, adding to the country's ancient, traditional, and civilisational knowledge base, wisdom and wealth.
- Still, it is disconcerting that **even after seven decades of Independence**, India is **afflicted by public health issues such as child malnutrition** (35.5% stunted, 67.1% anaemic) attributing to 68.2% of under-five child mortality.
- **Poor nutrition** not only adversely impacts health and survival but also leads to **diminished learning capacity, and poor school performance.**
- And in adulthood, it means **reduced earnings** and **increased risks of chronic diseases** such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- The Government appears determined to set it right with an aggressive push to the **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)**, rebranding it the **Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition, or POSHAN Abhiyaan.**
- It has the objective of reducing malnutrition in women, children and adolescent girls.
- The **Ministry of Women and Child (MWCD) continues to be the nodal Ministry** implementing the NNM with a vision to align different ministries to work in tandem on the "window of opportunity" of the first 1,000 days in life (270 days of pregnancy and 730 days; 0-24 months).
- Global and Indian evidence fully supports this strategy, which prevents the largely irreversible stunting occurring by two years of age.

POSHAN 2.0:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (now referred as POSHAN 2.0) rightly places a **special emphasis on selected high impact essential nutrition interventions**, combined with nutrition-sensitive interventions, which indirectly impact mother, infant and young child nutrition, such as improving coverage of maternal-child health services, enhancing women empowerment, availability, and access to improved water, sanitation, and hygiene and enhancing homestead food production for a diversified diet.

NHFS data is a pointer:

- Data from the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5** 2019-21, as **compared to NFHS-4** 2015-16, reveals a substantial improvement in a period of four to five years in several proxy indicators of women's empowerment, for which the Government deserves credit.
- There is a substantial **increase in antenatal service attendance** (58.6 to 70.0%); **women having their own saving bank accounts** (63.0 to 78.6%); **women owning mobile phones that they themselves use** (45.9 % to 54.0%); **women married before 18 years of age** (26.8 % to 23.3 %); women with 10 or more years of schooling (35.7% to 41.0%), and access to clean fuel for cooking (43.8 % to 68.6%).



Valid concerns:

- But, alarmingly, during this period, the country has not progressed well in terms of direct nutrition interventions.
- Preconception nutrition, maternal nutrition, and appropriate infant and child feeding remain to be effectively addressed. **India has 20% to 30% undernutrition even in the first six months of life** when exclusive breastfeeding is the only nourishment required.
- Neither maternal nutrition care interventions nor infant and young child feeding practices have shown the desired improvement. A maternal nutrition policy is still awaited.

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF):

- Despite a policy on infant and young child feeding, and a **ban on sale of commercial milk for infant feeding**, there has only been a marginal improvement in the practice of **exclusive breastfeeding (EBF)**. Child undernutrition in the first three months remains high.
- Creating awareness on EBF, promoting the technique of appropriate holding, latching and manually emptying the breast are crucial for the optimal transfer of breast milk to a baby.
- Recent evidence from the Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA), IIT Mumbai team indicates that well-planned breastfeeding counselling given to pregnant women during antenatal checkup prior to delivery and in follow up frequent home visits makes a significant difference.
- The daily weight gain of a baby was noted to average 30 to 35 grams per day and underweight prevalence rate reduced by almost two thirds.

Complementary feeding practices:

- NFHS-5 also confirms a gap in another nutrition intervention; complementary feeding practices, i.e., complementing semi-solid feeding with continuation of breast milk from six months onwards.

- Poor complementary feeding is often due to a lack of awareness to start feeding at six to eight months, what and how to feed appropriately family food items, how frequently, and in what quantity.
- The fact that **20% of children in higher socio- economic groups are also stunted** indicates poor knowledge in food selection and feeding practices and a child's ability to swallow mashed feed.

Where are we going wrong?

- So, creating awareness at the right time with the right tools and techniques regarding special care in the first 1,000 days deserves very high priority.
- The Prime Minister can give a major boost to POSHAN 2.0, like he did to Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, using his 'Mann Ki Baat' programme.
- There is a pressing need to revisit the system spearheading POSHAN 2.0 and overhaul it to remove any flaws in its implementation.
- There is a need to revisit the nodal system for nutrition programme existing since 1975, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) under the Ministry of Women and Child and examine whether it is the right system for reaching mother-child in the first 1000 days of life.

Take- Home Ration packets using PDS:

- There is also a need to explore whether there is an alternative way to distribute the ICDS supplied supplementary nutrition as Take- Home Ration packets through the Public Distribution (PDS) and free the anganwadi workers of the ICDS to undertake timely counselling on appropriate maternal and child feeding practices.
- There is need to systematically review the status, and develop and test a new system that would combine the human resource of ICDS and health from village to the district and State levels.
- This would address the mismatch that exists on focussing on delivery of services in the first 1000 days of life for preventing child undernutrition by having an effective accountable system.

Way Forward:

- It is time to think out of the box, and overcome systemic flaws and our dependence on the antiquated system of the 1970s that is slowing down the processes.
- Moreover, mass media or TV shows could organise discourses on care in the first 1,000 days to reach mothers outside the public health system.

Right intent, confusing content (GS Paper 3, Environment)

Context:

- June 2022 marked a decade since the E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules came into effect in India. The Rules have been amended a few times since.
- The most recent amendment is the **Draft E-waste Management Rules, 2022**, released for public comments in May 2022 by the Environment Ministry.
- Despite retaining the underlying extended producer responsibility (EPR) framework, the new draft Rules depart significantly from the previous regulations.

E-waste market:

- One major change is the **introduction of a market for e-waste recycling certificates**.
- The draft rules state that producers of e-goods have to ensure that **at least 60% of their produced e-waste is recycled by 2023**.
- This shift from collection rate targets (which set targets for the collection of e-waste as a percentage of the quantity of products sold by weight in the market in the previous year) in the current Rules to recycling rate targets in the proposed Rules is another important change.

Challenges:

- First, **large-scale recycling of e-waste is still in its infancy in India**. Most of the recycling of valuable material is carried out within the informal sector using inefficient and unsafe technologies.

- At a time when the technical feasibility and commercial viability of different recycling technologies and approaches for e-waste components is being worked upon in India, a target to recycle 60% of the e-waste generated in 2022-23 appears too optimistic.
- Second, if the regulatory targets were to create a vibrant market for recycling, the existing formal and informal players would have to play a crucial role. In light of this, the complete silence on regulating registered collectors, dismantlers, and producer responsibility organisations is puzzling.
- Who will ensure that these entities are carrying out their responsibilities in an environmentally safe manner? Or are these entities no longer covered under the EPR framework?



Engagement of informal sector:

- In addition, the informal sector accounts for a vast majority of e-waste processed in India. Most e-waste policy debates have centred around the integration of the informal sector into the formal systems.
- The proposed regulations, however, place the responsibility of such integration on the State governments without specifying what the incentives are for them to do this.

Aggregate weight:

- Experience from European countries suggests that recycling targets would likely be much more difficult for the regulators to monitor and enforce compared to collection targets. Does the recycling target apply to every component of an e-product or does it apply to its aggregate weight?
- This is important because the technological complexity and cost could vary by component. If it is by aggregate weight, as the Rules indicate, it could incentivise recycling of materials that are easy and inexpensive (plastics, copper, glass) to recycle as opposed to materials that are costly and technologically more difficult to recycle but perhaps have greater environmental footprint (rare earth metals).
- If the Ministry and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) decide to go ahead with recycling targets, they should come up with guidelines on how the regulated entities must demonstrate compliance with the targets.

Steering Committee powers:

- The other major change is the introduction of a **Steering Committee to oversee the “overall implementation, monitoring, and supervision”** of the regulations.
- This Committee, for example, has the power to decide on the product-wise “conversion factor” that determines the value of the recycling certificate, specify how the environmental compensation fund could be utilised, resolve disputes, and “remove any difficulty in smooth implementation of these regulations.”

- While such an institutional mechanism could provide more certainty in implementation, there is lack of representation in the Committee.
- The Rules propose the Chairman of the CPCB as the Chairperson of the Committee, which would include representatives of the Environment Ministry, the Electronics and IT Ministry, and the associations of producers and recyclers.
- But it is surprising that representation from science/academia and civil society organisations is not deemed appropriate.

Way Forward:

- The draft e-waste Rules propose a few positive changes, including expanding the definition of e-waste, more clearly specifying the penalties for violation of rules, introducing an environmental compensation fund based on the 'polluter pays' principle, and recognising the informal waste workers.
- The core changes it proposes within the EPR framework, however, require careful deliberation with all the relevant stakeholders before the Rules are finalised.

Enforcing the single-use plastic ban

(GS Paper 2, Governance)

Why in news?

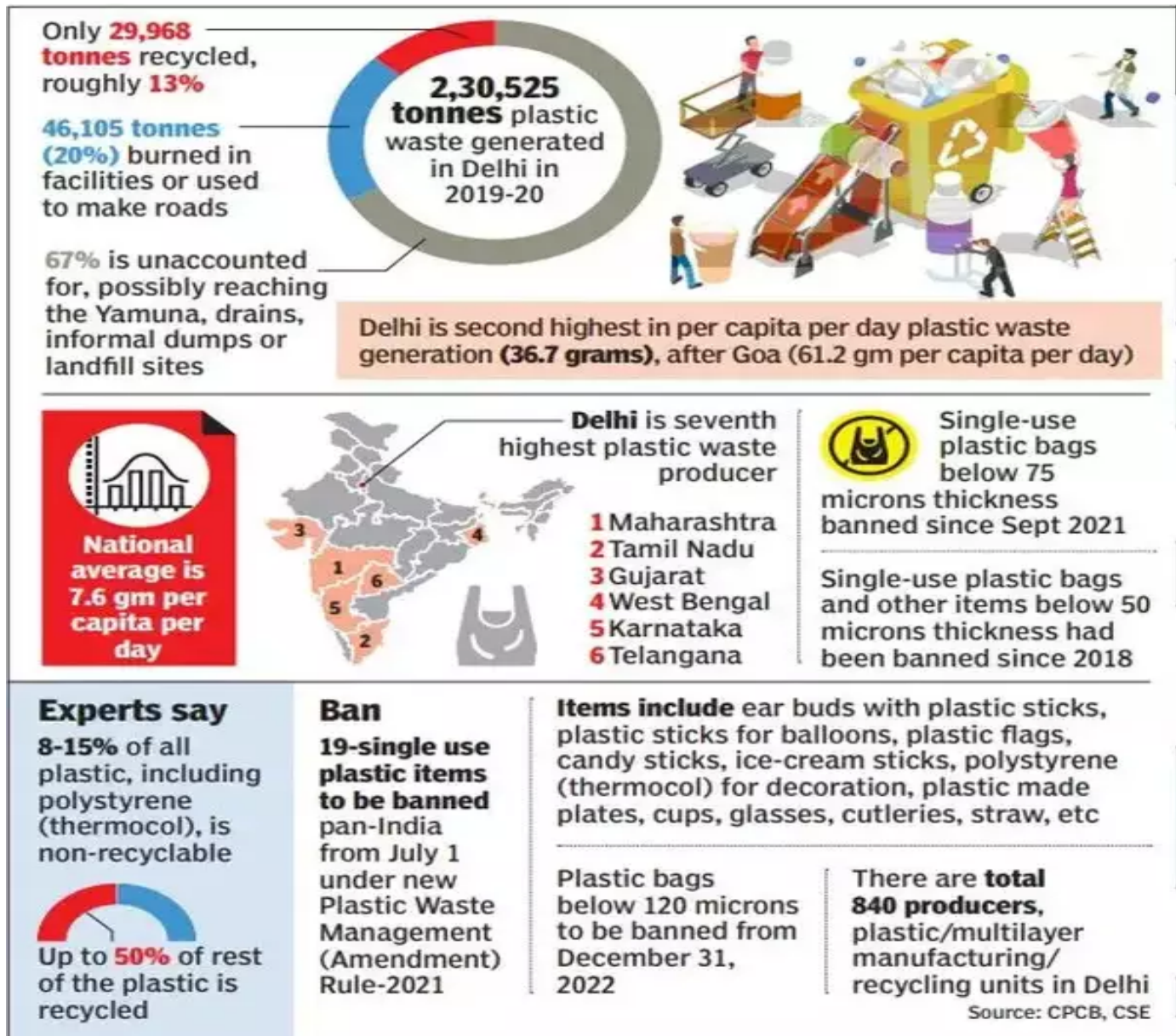
- A ban on the use of single-use plastics that was notified by the Union Environment Ministry on August 2021 came into effect on July 1, 2022.
- The notification said **national and State-level control rooms** would be set up to check illegal manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of banned single use plastic items.
- The Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, will also **prohibit manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of plastic carry bags** having thickness less than 120 microns with effect from December 31, 2022.

What is single-use plastic?

- The Centre defines it as an **object made of plastic that is intended to be used "only once"** before being disposed off or recycled.
- For the purposes of the ban, there is a list of 21 items that come under the definition of single-use plastic including ear buds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, thermocol for decoration, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 microns, stirrers.
- These objects were listed by the Environment Ministry in August when it notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.
- Plastic packaging waste, a major contributor to the much larger problem of plastic waste pollution, isn't yet covered under the phase-out of single-use plastic items.
- Mineral water bottles or plastic bottles of aerated drinks are unaffected by the ban, though, in popular imagination, they are representative of 'plastic pollution.'

How will the ban be implemented?

- So far 32 States/UTs have reportedly constituted a dedicated Task Force to eliminate the use of single-use plastics. Of these 14 states/UTs and 12 Central Ministries, as of March, had developed action plans describing how they would be enforcing this.
- A few States, for example Maharashtra, already have legislation banning the manufacture and storage of such plastic. But implementing it wasn't always successful as there was regular supply from States where such bans were not in force. An all-India ban, it's hoped, would make enforcement more effective.
- According to the Environment Protection (EP) Act, **violating the ban could invite "punitive action"**. Manufacturers and distributors of single-use plastic goods were directed to have zero inventory by June 30.
- The EP Act says that violating the ban could invite a five-year imprisonment and a fine of upto ₹1 lakh, or both. If the violations are repeated, it could mean additional fines up to ₹5000 for each day. There are different penalties for companies, organisations, and government departments under the EP Act.



What is the history of the single use plastic ban in India?

- A draft outlining the manner in which the ban was to be implemented was issued in March 2021 and involved amending the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- Before the amendments came into force, the Plastic Waste Management Rules only prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags and plastic sheets less than 50 microns in thickness in the country.
- There is a ban on sachets using plastic material used for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala.
- Since October 2021, there is a ban on the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic less than 75 microns as opposed to 50 microns under the earlier version of the rules.
- At the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019, India piloted a resolution on addressing single-use plastic products pollution.

Is there popular support for the ban?

- The All India Plastic Manufacturers Association has said that the ban would shutter 88,000 units in the plastic manufacturing business. These employ close to a million people and contribute to exports worth ₹25,000 crore.

- Fast Moving Consumer Goods companies (FMCG) would be severely affected by the ban due to their dependence on plastic straws, plates.
- Their replacements are available but cost much more than their plastic alternatives. There is also limited capacity in India to provide biodegradable replacements.

What is the environmental damage from single-use plastic?

- Unlike thicker and denser plastic material, single-use plastic objects being light and flexible are less amenable to being recycled. While 99% of plastic is recycled, they constitute heavier plastics that are likely to be collected by ragpickers and plastic waste recyclers.
- Single use plastics do not provide an incentive enough for the effort needed to collect them and hence they lie around, leach their toxins into the soil and cause environmental damage in both land and sea.