

**EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – AUGUST 23, 2019**

**TAMIL NADU**

◆ **The Tamil Nadu government - is planning to introduce a new 'Cluster model' to restructure the schools and reduce fall in admissions**

- ✓ According to the new model, headmasters of government higher secondary schools will monitor primary and middle schools within five-km radius to create clusters of 10 to 15 schools

**BETTER RESULT**

- Each HSS will have a cluster of 10 to 15 primary, middle and high schools
- Cluster resource centres will be set up in each HSS
- Headmasters of the 3,051 HSS in TN will monitor the schools falling under their cluster, and cluster resource teacher-educators will work under them

- ✓ Each cluster will have a 'resource centre' at the higher secondary school to provide training to teachers and academic support to schools.
- ✓ The function of the resource centres is to provide teachers adequate academic support — reference material, interactions with subject experts and strategies for better performance.
- ✓ The heads of higher secondary schools will have necessary powers to oversee teaching and learning in the entire cluster and give necessary guidance.
- ✓ As per the move, about 3,000 headmasters of higher secondary schools will take control of 31,000 primary and middle schools.

◆ **The Greater Chennai Corporation - has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with European Union to participate in International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme**

- ✓ According to the MoU, Chennai will partner with French city, Clermont- Ferrand
- ✓ The cities will develop local action plan and exchange ideas on water conservation and other issues, which are common to both

◆ **Covelong Point Surf Festival – commences on the beaches of Kovalam between August 23 and 25**



- ✓ The 7th edition of the surf-yoga-music festival brings together national and international surfers for a three-day competition
- ✓ It features yoga modules conducted by renowned instructors from all over the world, as well as the musical shows featuring artists from across India and the globe.
- ✓ The aim of the festival is to promote surfing, spread the message of health and wellness, provide a platform for the country's artists, promote cultural tourism and facilitate social engagement
- ✓ The festival this year features four open-to-all different yoga shalas, with eight different sessions each making it one of the biggest yoga events in the country as well
- ✓ The National Surfing challenge at this event will see the participation from 200 of the best surfers in the country and Asia
- ✓ Among the performers this year is two-time Grammy nominee mixer-programmer-DJ Carmen Rizzo from Los Angeles.
- ✓ Renowned South African cricket player, Jonty Rhodes is the brand ambassador of the Covelong Point Surf Festival since its inception

## **NATIONAL**

◆ **The Ministry of Health - has proposed a ban on the production and import of electronic cigarettes.**

- ✓ Health officials are proposing jail terms of up to three years, with a penalty of up to ₹5,00,000, for repeat offenders against the new rules
- ✓ First time offenders would face a prison term of up to one year and a fine of ₹1,00,000.
- ✓ Sixteen state governments in India have already prohibited e-cigarettes
- ✓ Electronic cigarettes or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) is used to describe various types of e-cigarettes and vapes, which work on the basis of 'heat not burn', where tobacco or nicotine solutions are heated to temperatures lower than cigarettes.

# SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

## ◆ **Russia - launches an unmanned rocket carrying a life-size humanoid robot named 'Fedor' to space**



- ✓ Fedor is expected to spend 10 days learning to assist astronauts on the International Space Station
- ✓ Fedor, abbreviated for Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research, is the first ever robot sent up by Russia
- ✓ It blasted off in a Soyuz MS-14 spacecraft from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan
- ✓ Instead of cosmonauts, Fedor, aka Skybot F850, was strapped into a specially adapted pilot's seat, with a small Russian flag in hand
- ✓ "Let's go. Let's go," the robot was heard saying during the launch, repeating the famous phrase used by first man in space Yuri Gagarin.
- ✓ The robot stands 5 foot 11 inches tall and weighs 160kg
- ✓ Fedor has Instagram and Twitter accounts with posts saying it is learning new skills such as opening a bottle of water and will try out these skills in low gravity in space
- ✓ Fedor copies human movements, a skill that allows it to help astronauts or even people on Earth to carry out tasks while the humans are strapped into an exoskeleton
- ✓ On board, the robot will perform tasks supervised by cosmonaut Alexander Skvortsov, who will wear an exoskeleton and augmented reality glasses in a series of experiments later this month

## DEFENCE

## ◆ **Coast Guards of India and the United States – conducted a joint exercise off the Chennai coast in the Bay of Bengal on August 23 to promote coordination between the two maritime forces**

- ✓ From the Indian side, ICG Shaurya and ICG Abheek ships and Chetak helicopter took part in the exercise that focused on anti-piracy, search and rescue, and fire fighting operations
- ✓ The US Coast Guard ship 'Stratton' and an aircraft associated with the vessel were part of the operation

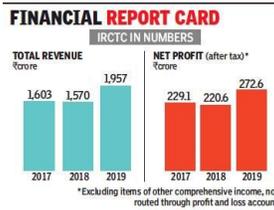


- ✓ Stratton was on her maiden visit to India after arriving at the Chennai port

# ECONOMY

## ◆ **The government - is moving ahead with listing of two railway PSUs — Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC)**

- ✓ The move expected to take place over the next few months is as part of the government's ambitious disinvestment programme for the current financial year.
- ✓ While the IRCTC listing is expected to help the government generate ₹500-₹600 crore by selling its 12% stake, the listing of IRFC is expected to raise around ₹2,000 crore through sale of 15% stake.



- ✓ Over two years ago, the government had approved listing of five railway PSUs — IRCON International, RITES, Rail Vikas Nigam, IRFC and IRCTC.
- ✓ Of these IRCON International and RITES were listed during the last financial year.

## ◆ **The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) - clarified that start-ups with an annual turnover of up to ₹25 crore will continue to get a tax holiday as specified in the Income Tax Act.**

- ✓ A start-up has to fulfil the conditions specified in Section 80-IAC for claiming this deduction
- ✓ According to Section 80-IAC of the Income Tax Act, eligible start-ups would be granted a tax deduction equal to 100% of the profits for three consecutive assessment years, out of the first seven years from the date of incorporation of the company.

## ◆ **Sabka Vishwas (Legacy Dispute Resolution) Scheme, 2019 – announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech, to be operationalised from September 1 with the window being open till December 31**

- ✓ The two main components of the scheme are dispute resolution and amnesty
- ✓ The dispute resolution component envisages the closing of pending disputes relating to legacy service tax and central excise cases that are now subsumed under GST (Goods and Services Tax)
- ✓ The amnesty component of the scheme offers taxpayers the opportunity to pay any outstanding tax and be free of any other consequence under the law.

- ✓ According to the government, the scheme offers a relief of 70% from the duty demand if it is less than ₹50 lakh and 50% if it is more than ₹50 lakh for all cases pending adjudication or appeal in any forum.
- ✓ In cases of voluntary disclosure, the person availing the scheme will have to only pay the full amount of disclosed duty.

## APPOINTMENTS

### ◆ **Ajay Kumar Bhalla – appointed as the next Home secretary**



- ✓ He replaces Rajiv Gauba, who has been elevated as Cabinet Secretary
- ✓ Last July, Bhalla was appointed Officer on Special Duty in the Home Ministry as a successor of Gauba.
- ✓ He was Secretary in the Ministry of Power.

## SPORTS

### ◆ **Former India opener Vikram Rathour - replaced Sanjay Bangar as India's new batting coach**



- ✓ Bharat Arun and R Sridhar were retained as bowling and fielding coaches respectively
- ✓ Till 2016, Rathour was a part of the senior selection committee, which was headed by Sandeep Patil.

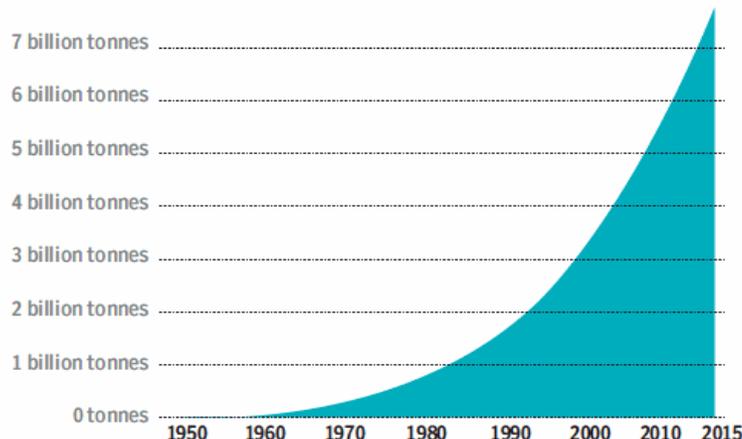
# WHY DO WE NEED PLASTIC BAN? – A REPORT

On August 20, the Indian Parliament announced it would ban the use of plastic items in the complex. From October 2, Railways will ban single-use plastics. The Indian government has already announced it plans to phase out disposable plastics by 2022. But it wasn't easy for the anti-plastic movement to get to where it is today. A look at the growing plastic menace and how the movement against it came to be

## Almost half of all the plastic ever made has been produced since 2000

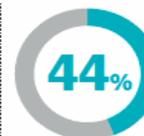
### CUMULATIVE GLOBAL PLASTICS PRODUCTION

(Measured in tonnes)



### 8.3 bn-9 bn tonnes

Total plastic produced globally since 1950. That's equivalent to more than four Mt Everests of waste



Of all plastic ever manufactured has been made since 2000

Indians, however, are among the world's lowest consumers of plastic

**25,940 tonnes** How much plastic waste is generated daily in India, about the weight of 9,000 Asian elephants



### 11kg per person

How much plastic the average Indian consumes in a year (2014-15), below the global average of 28kg



Of all plastic consumed in India is packaging

## From wonder material to public enemy No. 1

Even experts are surprised at the extent of the backlash against plastic, with many having grown used to the scientists' warnings going unheeded. Some even say the severity of the plastic crisis is overstated in the public sphere, which has led to an arguably more critical issue like climate change getting sidelined. But how did the public opinion on plastic get here?

### 1. THE EARLY PROMISE OF PLASTIC

**19TH CENTURY** A brittle, early form of plastic, called Parkesine or celluloid, is used to make household items

**1907** First iteration of modern plastic, **Bakelite**, invented in the US. Initially intended for use in electrical wiring, its producers quickly realised its potential for use in thousands of products. Over the next few decades, more varieties of plastic are invented that quickly become popular for their versatility

Household goods, including radios, were made of Bakelite



### 2. WAR MAKES PLASTIC ESSENTIAL

**1939-1945** Plastic becomes indispensable during WWII. It's used in everything at a time when most other resources are scarce

➤ US plastic production triples during the war, creating the enormous petrochemical industry

### 3. POST-WAR PLASTIC BOOM

**1950s-1970s** After the war, plastic products continue to spread, eventually replacing cotton, glass and cardboard

**1954** Already, people warn of future problems. Lloyd Stouffer, editor of trade journal Modern Plastics, says the "future of plastics is in the trash can," a claim for which he is mocked

**1965** Plastic enters 13th consecutive year of record growth. The throwaway container market displaces the returnable container model. From a 96% return rate of reusable containers in 1950, return rate falls below 5% in the 1970s

**1970** Global soft drinks majors begin to replace their glass bottles with plastic



## 4. CORPORATIONS FIGHT OFF EARLY OPPOSITION

**1970s** US media outlets raise concerns over growing waste disposal crisis. New York City begins taxing plastic bottles, the US Congress considers a ban on nonreturnable containers and Hawaii bans plastic bottles. But courts strike down the bans and Congress abandons its plans after lobbyists say it will destroy jobs

**1970s-1980s** Oil and chemical companies band together with drinks and packaging producers to shift the responsibility for plastic waste to the public, arguing irresponsible consumers are behind the waste crisis, not the corporations producing them



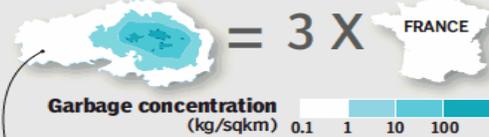
A recycling facility in Thailand

Plastic industry pushes for **household recycling** to tackle waste crisis. But the industry overstates the potential of recycling plastic, which degrades every time it's recycled and can't be reused as effectively as glass or metal

## 5. RESEARCH FINALLY BEGINS TO SWAY PUBLIC OPINION

**1990s** Researchers find 60-80% of waste found in oceans is non-biodegradable plastic

### GREAT PACIFIC GARBAGE PATCH



An oceanographer coins the term "**great garbage patch**" to describe the buildup of plastic waste in oceans. There are an estimated eight such patches, the largest of which is three times the size of France and has 79,000 tonnes of waste

**2004** Another oceanographer coins the term "**microplastic**" to describe miniscule pieces of plastic that break off from larger objects or are deliberately manufactured. Researchers find that microplastics are being consumed by marine life, resulting in serious damage

**2010s** Widespread protests against microbeads, small grains of plastic used in cosmetics and cleaning

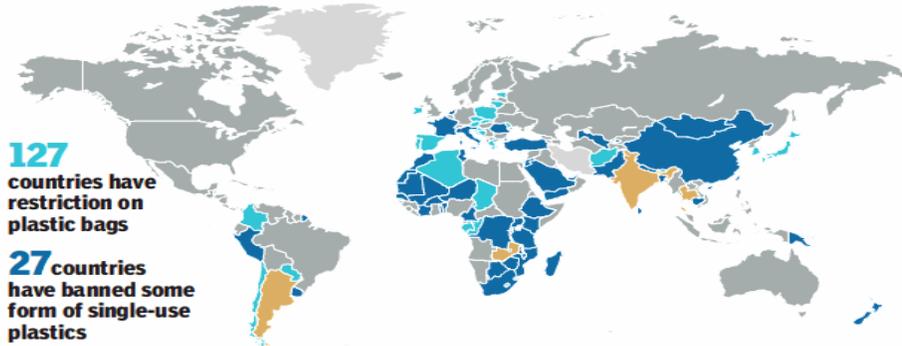
products, over the harm caused to sea life. Public groups also protest synthetic fabrics that shed microscopic fibres with every wash, and tires that shed plastic fibres when used

**2015** A University of Georgia research team estimates between 4.8m and 12.7m tonnes of plastic enters the ocean every year, which is expected to double by 2025

## Governments are taking action against plastic

### PLASTIC BAG BANS BY COUNTRY

■ Full ban ■ Partial ban ■ Ban under consideration ■ No ban ■ No data



**127** countries have restriction on plastic bags

**27** countries have banned some form of single-use plastics

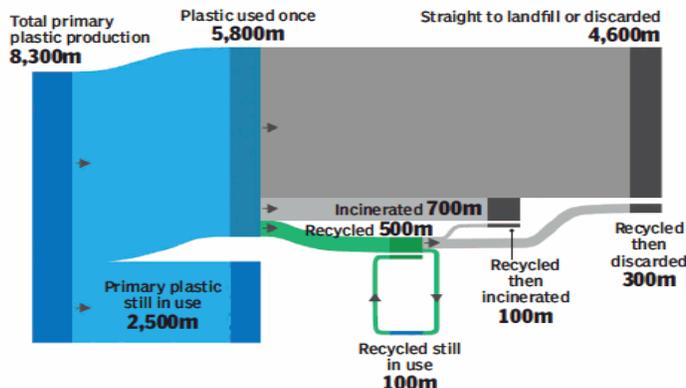
## But almost 80% of all plastic remains in the environment

**450** years to forever is how long plastic endures in the environment

**40%** of plastic produced is packaging used once and then discarded

**79%** Of all plastic produced since 1950 is still in the environment

### GLOBAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION AND ITS FATE (1950-2015) (Measured in tonnes)



## There's pressure now on firms to take responsibility for plastic pollution

The plastic industry is expected to come under more regulations and public pressure, which could hurt their bottom lines



How much beverage companies could lose in profits to increasing regulations and taxes on plastic over the next decade



Potential decline in pre-tax profits of four of the biggest plastic packaging producers in the medium term if they continue producing plastic

**One-sixth** Estimated reduction in demand for petrochemicals in the next 20 years in the face of increased regulations

Even so, Royal Dutch Shell is among several petrochemical giants continuing to expand with new plastic production plants in the US. The new Shell unit alone is expected to produce more than a million tonnes of plastic a year when its complete



Compiled by: Anjishnu Das; Source: Our World In Data, CPCB, UN, media reports