

PARLIAMENT QUESTION: NCCR Studies on Microplastic Pollution

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The Ministry of Earth Sciences, through the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), monitors microplastics, mesoplastics, macroplastics and marine litter at selected locations along the Indian coast, including Thoothukudi and the Gulf of Mannar. The studies indicate that synthetic filaments are the predominant type of microplastic, while riverine discharge and Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) are the major sources of microplastic pollution.

NCCR has developed a Clean Coast Index (CCI) based on the abundance of microplastics and macroplastics data available in the coastal environment. The CCI assessment classifies the Thoothukudi coast and the Gulf of Mannar as 'moderately clean'. The microplastic abundance in sediment is observed between 28 to 60 particles/50gm of the sediment along Gulf of Mannar and Thoothukudi coast. Based on the available information, no major microplastic pollution hotspots have been identified in the region.

The National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) undertakes scientific monitoring and assessment of marine litter and microplastics along the Indian coast and provides scientific inputs to the concerned Ministries and stakeholders for policy formulation and management.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has undertaken several policy measures to reduce plastic pollution, including the prohibition of identified Single-Use Plastic (SUP) items having low utility and high littering potential with effect from 1 July 2022. MoEFCC has also notified the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022, introducing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Guidelines for plastic packaging. These guidelines prescribe mandatory targets for collection, recycling, reuse of rigid plastic packaging and use of recycled plastic content, thereby promoting sustainable plastic waste management and reducing the plastic footprint. Since 2022, about 232 lakh tonnes of plastic packaging waste have been processed under the EPR framework.

The draft National Marine Litter Policy has been prepared and has been shared with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for consultation.

This information was given by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences Dr. Jitendra Singh in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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