



Single use food, beverage packaging forms 84 % of Himalayan plastic waste

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Context

- Single-use food and beverage packaging forms more than 84% of the plastic waste in the eco-sensitive Himalayan region, an anti-waste collective of NGOs has found.

Single-Use Plastics

- Single-Use Plastics are items **used once and then thrown away or recycled**, like **plastic bags, straws, bottles, and food packaging**. About **half of all plastics used are single-use**.
- Unfortunately, since **recycling rates are low**, plastic that ends up in the ocean harms marine life and can be toxic. These harmful chemicals can also enter our food and water, causing health issues.
- **Health Risks**: Some single-use plastics contain harmful chemicals like **BPA and phthalates**, which can leach into food and beverages, potentially causing health issues, especially when plastics are used for heating or storing food.
- **Climate Change**: The **production and disposal of SUPs** contribute to **greenhouse gas emissions**, adding to the problem of climate change.
- **Microplastics in Food**: Microplastics that **contaminate water sources and marine life can eventually enter the human food chain**, raising concerns about potential health risks.
- India **banned 19 identified single-use plastic items in 2021**, but it fell short of addressing the broader spectrum of single-use plastics still in circulation.
- The annual share of banned single-use plastic items is roughly 0.6 million tonnes per year.
- The **remaining single-use plastic items**, comprising mostly packaging products, are covered under the **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy introduced by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) in 2022**.
- The **EPR policy specifies target collection and recycling**, ignoring the fact that **some single-use plastics that are not banned (such as multilayered packaging) are non-recyclable**.