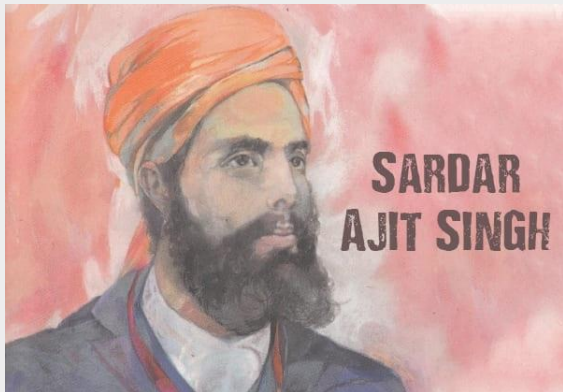


1. Bhagat Singh's uncle Ajit Singh who started Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement**Introduction****Pagri Sambhal Jatta Movement**

Farmers protesting at the Punjab and Haryana borders are observing February 23 as Pagri Sambhal Diwas, in honour of Ajit Singh, paternal uncle of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

Who was Ajit Singh, and why is he an important figure for protesting farmers? What was the 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' movement?

Who was Ajit Singh?

Born on February 23, 1881 at Khatkar Kalan village in Punjab (it is now part of Shaheed

Bhagat Singh Nagar district), Ajit Singh was a prominent freedom fighter, revolutionary, and nationalist leader. He played a significant role in inspiring his nephew Bhagat Singh.

Ajit was the elder brother of Kishan Singh, Bhagat Singh's father. From 1909 to 1947 he remained in exile, as he was targeted by the British for his role in the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement. He came to India in March 1947 but died in Dalhousie due to ill health on August 15, 1947, the day India got independence.

What was the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement?

In 1907, Ajit Singh started the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement in protest against three agricultural laws imposed by the British. 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' literally translates to 'take care of your turban, o farmer', and invokes self respect and honour.

The three laws were: The Punjab Land Alienation Act, 1900; The Punjab Land Colonisation Act, 1906; and The Doab Bari Act, 1907.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act restricted the rights of farmers to sell or mortgage their land freely. It favored moneylenders and landlords, making it difficult for peasants to escape debt. The Punjab Land Colonisation Act gave the British control over land ownership in the newly developed Chenab Colony (now in Pakistan). Farmers had to transfer their land to the British government upon death instead of passing it to their heirs.

The Doab Bari Act, 1907, too, took away farmers' ownership rights over their lands, effectively reducing them to contract workers.

Along with this, the British raised taxes on agricultural land and water for irrigation, increasing the financial burden on farmers. Many small farmers and peasants were forced into debt and land loss.

Soon, farmers started protests against these laws, demanding their repeal. Ajit Singh and Kishan Singh (Bhagat Singh's father) formed the Bharat Mata Society, a revolutionary group for farmers. Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders also supported the movement. The slogan "Pagri Sambhal Jatta" was coined by Banke Dayal, a nationalist poet, and became a symbol of resistance.

Impact of the movement

Pagri Sambhal Jatta was one of the first major farmer movements against British rule, laying the foundation for future resistance in Punjab. The agitation led to mass protests and civil disobedience. Due to intense pressure, the British government withdrew some of the oppressive clauses of the laws.

The movement inspired future protests, including the Ghadar Movement and Bhagat Singh's revolutionary activities.

Both Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai were arrested in May 1907 and exiled to Burma (now Myanmar), but due to public pressure, were released in November 1907. Ajit Singh, however, escaped to Persia, then Turkey, Brazil, Germany, and later settled in Italy. He worked closely with revolutionaries in Europe and was associated with Lala Hardayal and Madame Cama.

Pagri Sambhal Diwas

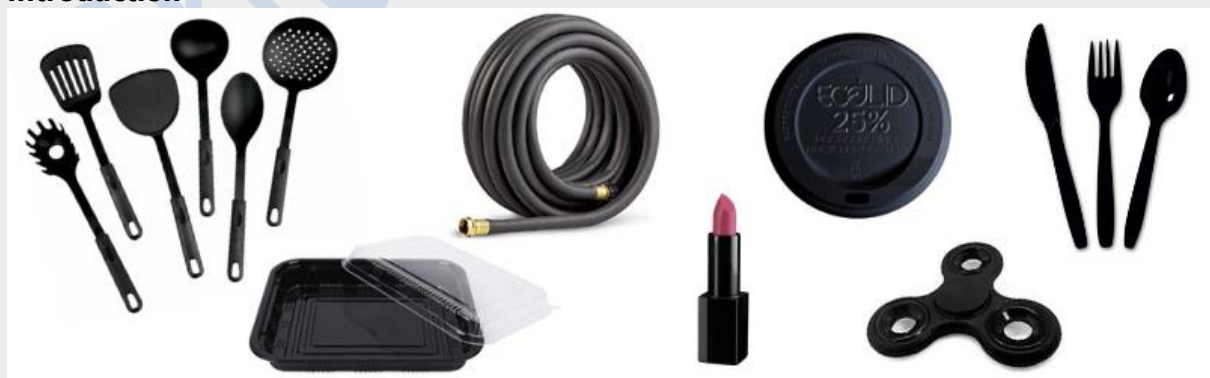
From 2021 onwards, February 23 has been observed as Pagri Sambhal Diwas. In 2021, farmers were protesting at the Delhi borders seeking repeal of the now-scraped three farm laws, and hence had observed Ajit Singh's birth anniversary as Pagri Sambhal Diwas. At present, farmers have been protesting at Punjab and Haryana borders since February 13, 2024, seeking MSP as a legal guarantee among other demands.

Relevance: GS Prelims; History

Source: Indian Express

2. What is black plastic and why you should get rid of it?

Introduction



Black plastics are widely used in various industries, including electronics, automotive, packaging, and construction, due to their durability and aesthetic appeal. However, their environmental impact and potential health hazards are increasingly becoming a cause for concern. This article explores the composition, recycling challenges, and health risks associated with black plastics.

What Are Black Plastics?

Black plastics are primarily made from recycled or virgin plastic materials infused with carbon black, a pigment that gives them their distinctive color. These plastics are found in everyday items such as food trays, electronic casings, automobile parts, and packaging materials.

Recycling Challenges

One of the biggest environmental concerns with black plastics is their poor recyclability. Most recycling facilities use optical sorting technology, which relies on near-infrared (NIR) sensors to identify and separate different types of plastic. However, the carbon black pigment absorbs infrared light, making it difficult for sorting machines to detect and categorize black plastics. As a result, these plastics often end up in landfills or are incinerated, contributing to environmental pollution and carbon emissions.

Health Hazards of Black Plastics

Despite their widespread use, black plastics pose significant health risks, primarily due to their composition and potential for chemical contamination. Here are some key concerns:

1. Presence of Toxic Chemicals

Many black plastics are made from recycled electronic waste (e-waste), which may contain hazardous substances such as brominated flame retardants (BFRs), heavy metals (lead, cadmium, mercury), and phthalates. When used in food packaging or kitchen utensils, these toxins can leach into food and beverages, posing serious health risks.

2. Endocrine Disruption

Certain chemicals found in black plastics, such as bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates, are known endocrine disruptors. They interfere with hormonal balance and have been linked to reproductive issues, developmental disorders, and increased risks of certain cancers.

3. Carcinogenic Risks

Carbon black itself has been classified as a possible human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Prolonged exposure to carbon black particles, particularly in industrial settings, has been associated with respiratory issues, lung damage, and an increased risk of lung cancer.

4. Microplastic Contamination

As black plastics degrade, they release microplastics into the environment, which can be ingested by humans through food, water, and air. Studies have shown that microplastics can accumulate in the body, leading to inflammation, cellular damage, and potential long-term health effects.

Alternatives and Solutions

To mitigate the environmental and health risks posed by black plastics, several measures can be adopted:

1. Improved Sorting Technologies: Developing advanced recycling technologies that can accurately detect and process black plastics.

2. Use of Safer Additives: Encouraging manufacturers to replace carbon black with alternative colorants that do not interfere with recycling.

3. Regulation and Awareness: Implementing stricter regulations on the use of toxic chemicals in black plastics and raising consumer awareness about safer alternatives.

4. Adopting Sustainable Packaging: Promoting biodegradable and eco-friendly packaging materials as alternatives to black plastics.

Conclusion

Black plastics, despite their functional advantages, pose significant challenges in terms of recyclability and health safety. With growing awareness and technological advancements, it is crucial to find sustainable alternatives and implement stringent regulations to reduce their impact on both human health and the environment. Consumers, manufacturers, and policymakers must work together to promote safer and more eco-friendly materials for a healthier future.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Environment

3. 2025 German Elections

Winning Political Party

In the recent German federal election held on February 23, 2025, the political landscape experienced significant shifts. The center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), led by Friedrich Merz, secured approximately 28.5% of the vote, translating to 208 seats in the Bundestag. This victory positions Merz to become the next Chancellor of Germany. Merz has indicated plans to initiate coalition talks with the SPD to form a stable government.

Second Political Party

Notably, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) achieved its best-ever result, obtaining around 20.8% of the vote and securing 152 seats, making it the second-largest party in the Bundestag. Despite their significant gains, Merz has categorically ruled out forming a coalition with the AfD.

Third Political Party

The center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), led by outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz, experienced a historic low, garnering only 16.4% of the vote and 120 seats. This marks their worst performance since World War II.

Bundestag

The Bundestag is the lower house of parliament in Germany, consisting of 736 members elected every four years. It is responsible for enacting laws and overseeing the government.

Germany has a bicameral legislature, consisting of two houses:

1. Bundestag (Lower House) – The primary legislative body, directly elected by the people, responsible for making laws and electing the Chancellor.

2. Bundesrat (Upper House) – Represents Germany's 16 federal states (Länder) and participates in legislation, especially on matters affecting state governments.

While the Bundestag holds more legislative power, the Bundesrat plays a crucial role in federal governance, ensuring state interests are considered in national policies.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

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