

Time to pick up pace to dispose plastic items

CHALLENGES From lack of awareness and non-plastic alternatives to invisible collection bins, the civic body is lagging in getting rid of banned plastic products

HT SPOTLIGHT
PART 1 OF 2

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MUMBAI: With only two months to go before the state implements the plastic ban, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) efforts to dissuade citizens from using the banned items have hit initial hurdles: lack of awareness campaigns and partly or completely hidden collection bins.

In a notification in March, the state banned use and sale of select plastic items. It gave citizens and manufacturers three months to dispose them.

As a first step to get rid of plastic, the BMC has placed close to 60 collection bins.

Black-gold bins have been put up at markets, segregation centres and ward offices. Citizens can dump banned plastic items in these bins in the next couple of months. When HT visited a few of these locations, the bins were found either empty or hidden. Some have not been placed at the said locations and others were filled with paper and cardboard waste instead.

Yogesh Nikam, shopowner at Hindmata market, said, "People are not aware of the collection centers. The bins should be placed prominently." A market inspector at Dadar West municipal market said no plastic items had been dumped in the collection bin for the past eight days. "Nobody wants to walk all the way to trash just one or two plastic bags." The corporation's solid waste management department has now drawn up a strategy for collection centers and spreading awareness.

Civic officials said that 37 metric tonnes of plastic had been collected in the past 10 days. "The collected plastic will be handed over to the authorised agencies for recycling. However, there is a shortage of such organisations," admitted an official.

Meanwhile, vendors and shop owners said lack of alternatives, unaffordability and loss in business were proving troublesome. While there is no viable alternative to items such as plastic straws and plastic sheets, some have switched to products made of betel-nut leaves and disposable

MUMBAI, GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER

The Maharashtra government officially banned plastic items by issuing a notification on March 23. In a second notification, it lifted the ban on PET bottles (less than half a litre). Here is how Mumbai is trying to get rid of the banned items

WHAT IS BANNED

- All kinds of plastic bags irrespective of their thickness
- Plastic sheets to wrap or store products, pouches to store liquid
- Non-woven polypropylene bags
- All one-time use disposable items made up of plastic and thermocol

1-3 months
Time you have to get rid of plastic

HOW TO DISPOSE OF BANNED ITEMS

PLASTIC COLLECTION CENTERS

Black and gold bins have been placed strategically at about 60 locations

PET BOTTLE CRUSHERS

Under the corporate social responsibility, the BMC plans to install about 500 machines at public places

HELPLINE

For citizens' convenience, the BMC will start a toll-free helpline service to provide pick-up services for all residential and commercial buildings

WHERE YOU WILL FIND COLLECTION BINS

SOUTH MUMBAI:

Colaba Causeway, Crawford municipal market, Cowasjee Patel Tank, Chor Bazaar, Dedh Galli, Kamathipura, Zaveri Bazaar, Flora Fountain, Kala Ghoda, Gateway of India, Girgaum Chowpatty, Mangaldas Market, Kalbadevi, Fashion Street

SUBURBS:

Linking Road, Bandra, Lokhandwala market, Juhu Chowpatty, Sainath market, Malad, Borivli municipal market, Chembur market

Ghatkopar market, Sion Circle, Dadar Flower market, Hindmata market, LBS market, Matunga, Mulund market, KNP market, Dadar (west)



■ The BMC has placed 60 plastic collection bins at various locations, including Hindmata cloth market. KUNAL PATIL/HT



500kg
capacity of the bins

46 metric tonnes
Plastic collected by BMC in the past two weeks

PENALTY

Three months from the date of the notification, 105 shop inspectors and 210 market inspectors will penalise violators

₹5,000 and ₹10,000
For first and second offences

₹25,000 and three-month jail; For third offence

A GLOBAL SCORE

300 million tonnes
(approximately) is annual production of plastic in the world

13 million tonnes
finds its way into our oceans



HOW PLASTIC WREAKS HAVOC

Some types of plastic degrade over half-a-century, while the rest are non-degradable

They are either dumped or burnt, choking water bodies and releasing toxic fumes

In urban drains, they choke the flow of sewage and the BMC

incurs huge expenditure to essentially de-silt them

Aquatic life is severely affected owing to plastic debris. Birds, whales and dolphins ingest plastic and choke on it

Plastic production is highly polluting and equally polluting is

its disposal

Plastic can leach carcinogenic chemicals into our groundwater and soil at landfills and other unregulated dump yards

About 10% of municipal solid waste in India is plastic

cloth bags.

Prakash Sahane, a vegetable vendor, said he sometimes provided cloth bags free. Walid Shaikh, who sells packaging products, said, "Nobody wants to buy alternative items for one-time use as they are expensive."

To raise awareness, the BMC plans to conduct open exhibitions next month. Assistant municipal commissioner Kiran Dighavkar said advertisements at public

places, short films and social media will also be used for campaigning.

Deputy municipal commissioner Nishi Chauhan said, "A detailed plan is being chalked out for awareness campaigns, and our staff will be trained for the same."

TOMORROW

Loss of jobs & businesses

State to install 2.5k plastic bottle crushing units

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MUMBAI: To ensure proper disposal of plastic bottles, the state government will soon install 2,500 plastic bottle crushing machines at public places with larger footfall areas across the

state. Of these, 500 will be installed in Mumbai.

Local bodies, which are the implementing agencies for the plastic ban, will select places for installation. A senior civic official said, "We are getting more machines, around 2,000, to install across the state. Two machines

have been installed at the BMC headquarters for demonstration and have received a good response." The machines, which the state will obtain through corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, will be installed at tourist spots, gardens, and other areas with higher footfall.

One of the members of the plastic manufacturing associations confirmed the development, saying, "There is no pre-decided number, but most machines will be in public places. We are looking forward to meeting the state to request it to exempt more items from the ban, as it will affect

lakhs of jobs across the state." The state banned single-use plastic along with thermocol, polyethylene terephthalate, and polyethylene terephthalate bottles of less than 0.5 litres. Later lifted the ban on all PET and PETE bottles with capacity of less than half a litre.