

# It is plastic as usual in Mumbai

Many citizens feel ban has remained only on paper and social media. Plastic is actually more visible than paper in the city

AKASH SAKARIA / Mumbai

The statewide plastic ban, in force from June 23, has turned out to be a damp squib for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Not only are the banned plastic materials very much in use across Mumbai, but the civic body has been reduced to merely calculating how much plastic is being seized.

The list of what plastics were banned and what alternatives were available is also out, with uniformed civic officials taking it upon themselves to crack down on the plastic so well-entrenched in people's daily lives. Then

what seems to be the problem with the state government's life-without-plastic opus?

Many citizens feel the ban remained only on paper and social media. "I have only read figures stating fines collected and plastic seized. That too, hardly from three or four places. We still don't know for whom the plastic ban is. Shopkeepers still give us plastic bags if we keep mum about it," said Kunal Acharya, a Kandivli resident.

Going by social media trends, the ban seems to be successful. But the ground reality still is, plastic is more visible than paper. Mumbai seas still spew out plastic. Plastic bags and bouquets



wrapped in plastic were also seen at birthday celebrations for Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray. We are talking about the birthday of the Sena president, whose party rules the BMC.

Another Mumbaikar questioned whether the ban was

only a one-month phenomenon. "Everything is implemented initially and later forgotten. Citizens may be forgetful but not the executive. Sadly, the government has failed even in imposing this good initiative," said Shibu Bhattacharjee, a

Mahim resident.

But the civic officials have a different way of looking at the ban. Until now, according to Nidhi Choudhari, Deputy Municipal Commissioner (special), officials had seized over 9,000 kilograms of plastic and fined over 1,350 people.

"The squads are constantly visiting shops and establishments to ensure people stop the trade, manufacture and use of banned plastic," Choudhari said.

However, the shopkeepers in suburbs have yet to be visited by the blue-jacketed 'plastic ban squad'. They said they had only read about them and seen them

in pictures.

"Since the ban kicked off, we haven't noticed any official coming to inquire about the banned plastic materials, so we continue to use them. I personally think there is no checking. It was only to create fear in the minds of manufacturers and bulk producers," said a shopowner in Jogheshwari.

The pet project of Maharashtra's Environment Minister Ramdas Kadam, the ban has been a nightmare for civic bodies and government authorities. The state government has received criticism from many corners of the state, alleging it has implemented the ban properly

