

# Govt sees red over 'green' synthetic bags, says they're worse than plastic

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**Mumbai:** The environment ministry has red-flagged the “eco-friendly cloth bags” being sold at malls and shops for Rs 3-4 apiece. Officials said these non-woven synthetic bags have polypropylene, which is a bigger threat to environment.

“They are non-recyclable and cause irreparable damage to soil even after disintegration. We will crack down on manufacturers and users of such bags and fine them after the three-month reprieve,” said a senior environment official.

The state through a notification on March 23 has banned use of plastic. Citizens have three months to dispose prohibited items. “The bags degrade when exposed to sunlight; it happens only at a certain temperature. Those conditions hardly exist during monsoon and winter,” said an official from MPCB said.

An activist said if these bags do not disintegrate in the absence of the required temperature, they can be more harmful than plastic. The MPCB official added that even if they degrade, they pollute soil with polypropylene granules, which take at least 12 years to die. “The fine for such bags will also be Rs 5,000,” said an official.

<p>In view of the plastic ban, companies are making biopolymer bags to deliver their goods, including grocery and milk. Some firms have already brought these bags in the market</p>	
<p><b>THEY WILL BE LATER USED AS FERTILISERS</b></p>	
<p>➤ Biopolymer thread is derived from starch of corn, vegetable or grain</p>	<p>Some major grocery chains and milk companies have already had trial runs and are using the bags. The only thing awaited is mass production. Right now, the bags are costly at ₹4 apiece, but eventually, they will get cheaper</p>
<p>➤ As the production of these bags goes up, farmers producing grains and vegetables will benefit as companies will buy raw material for the thread</p>	
<p>➤ The bags, after use, will be composted and used as fertilizers</p>	

## Ban on microbeads, microplastics soon?

The state is considering a ban on plastic microbeads and microplastics found mostly in cosmetics and personal care products. Environment department officials said the Centre too is looking at such a ban and if the ban comes into effect, all cosmetic companies may have to abide by it. However, it may be a long roads

before the state issues a notification to this effect.

Officials said such a ban exists in many western countries, with the most recent one being UK. “The ban is required to protect marine life as the beads and microplastic ends up in seawater,” said an official. TNN