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## Plastic peddlers punch out GO

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For long, plastic has been identified as, and proved to be, a major ecological threat due to its non-biodegradable and carcinogenic nature. The state government has done its bit to regulate indiscriminate use of the material by enacting GO Ms. No. 25, dated March 30, 2003. But, flouted openly, has turned out to be a toothless one.

“The manufacture and use of coloured (recycled) plastic less than 20 microns in thickness has been banned within the State. And establishments use these as they are cheap. Littering of plastic is another major threat to the ecosystem and the GO also offends. But this is also not being followed,” says environmentalist Captain Rama Rao. It may be mentioned here that recycled plastic required to be denoted as such with markings indicating the percentage of recycled matter. The black bags used by liquor sellers, however, do not carry such indicators. Nor do the various coloured plastic containers used to store food items. Colours camouflage the dull hue of recycled plastic. Non-recycled plastic, on the other hand, is clear and transparent.

Units found side-stepping these rules could be slapped fines ranging from Rs 25,000 to 50,000. Further offences would invite licenses. And errant retailers, vendors and users could be fined Rs. 2,500 to 5,000. Senior administrative manager at the APF says, “We are only focusing on spreading awareness about misuse of plastic. The enforcement of the government order is the the Collectorate and the MCH.” When informed that the GO directs the PCB to enforce rules pertaining to manufacture and reuse of plastic bags he replies, “Due to infrastructural and manpower problems, we cannot do routine checks.”

When it comes to proper use and disposal of carry bags and containers, the Collectorate and the MCH are the enforcement agencies. When contacted, Collector Rajeshwar Tiwari says, “This job is the responsibility of the municipal corporation.” While saying that no units operate within the MCH limits, Additional Commissioner (health and sanitation) Dr G Malsur, however, admitted, “Though units, those outside the city may be supplying the material.” When pointed out that black plastic bags and other coloured containers are being used in the city, he says, “I will look into the matter.”

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