

# Retail packing exempted from plastic ban

## No Penalty Now For Bin Liners, Takeaway Containers; Relief Comes With Riders

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### Mumbai:

In a decision that waters down the statewide plastic ban imposed on Saturday, the state government has exempted retail packaging from its ambit. On Wednesday, it also instructed that no penalty be imposed on garbage bin liners and takeaway containers used by restaurants for now, as the issue is under consideration, said a senior official present at the meeting. Bulk consumers such as malls, multiplexes and marriage halls will be asked to set up collection centres so that the plastic waste generated on their premises can be sent for recycling.

“We have asked corporations to go after only three categories of things for now—plastic bags, one-time use plastic cutlery and thermocol decorations and cutlery. Everything else needs to be examined again and till a decision is not taken, no action should be taken,” said the official.

An empowered committee took the decision on Wednesday to exempt retail plastic packaging of not less than 250gm from the ban and a notification on the exemption will be issued on Thursday, said state environment minister Ramdas Kadam. “We discussed this with the CM in the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, but the exemption is being made with a few riders,” said Kadam. Retailers will have to set up a buyback mechanism in the next three months to ensure that the plastic returns to them.

### No plastic for loose milk, people need to carry vessels to shops

For that, Kadam said, the government will insist that retailers print their names and quality of plastic on the packs.

“If they do not fall in line, we can, at any time, bring them back under the ban,” said Kadam and added that the ban has been lifted for only packing foodstuff due to few other options. Loose milk sellers will not benefit from this exemption though, as “people can use vessels to carry it”.

TOI had reported that an expert committee comprising five senior bureaucrats had told the empowered panel, formed to take a decision on the exemption, of the difficulty in enforcing the plastic packaging ban in neighbourhood kirana stores that use plastic to sell items such as dal, rice and sugar.

Officials also said to avoid confusion, the environment department is coming out with a pictorial list of what is exempted and what is not. It will also start massive awareness campaigns on the ban.

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# BMC inspectors fining us for reusable plastic, say hoteliers

*Rhythm Sachdeva*

## **Mumbai:**

In the aftermath of the state-wide ban on single-use plastic products, the Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHAR) has alleged harassment at the hands of BMC inspectors for using recyclable containers, which are permitted for now.

On their part, civic inspectors have sought clarity from the environment ministry on banned plastics.

On Saturday, civic inspectors visited some eateries in Chembur and fined them for using plastic containers that AHAR, an association of over 8,000 restaurants and bars, argues are reusable.

“Our plastic containers are made with a thicker material of 500 to 600 microns, which is around five times the average plastic product of barely 100 microns and cannot be crumpled and tampered with, as is the case with tiffin boxes,” said AHAR president Santosh Shetty.

AHAR held a press conference on Wednesday to announce that following the plastic ban, they have lost 20% of their business on an average as their takeaway services have taken a “huge hit”.

AHAR members said they have begun to charge patrons more for takeaways in recyclable and reusable plastic. “The largest container is available for Rs 20 and the smallest for Rs 2. On an average, a consumer might end up paying Rs 8 extra for packaging.”

Meanwhile, the BMC’s standing committee members slammed the civic administration for creating confusion and harassing citizens for using recyclable plastic.

Refuting the allegations, deputy municipal commissioner (special) Nidhi Choudhary said, “We are not taking punitive action against any material that the government is considering to exempt from the ban.”

The Federation of Retail Traders’ Welfare Association has sent a memorandum to the environment minister and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) along with signatures of several shopkeepers for relaxation of the ban.

# 'EATERIES HAVE LOST 20% BIZ SINCE BAN'

## What kinds of plastic are banned in restaurants?

- > Plastic carry bags of any shape and size
- > Plastic and thermocol disposable cutlery
- > Straws and stirrers
- > Thermocol for decorative purpose
- > Non-woven polypropylene bags

**Microns of plastic that were allowed earlier**  
Any plastic above  
50 microns

## What is under govt consideration, hence no action?

- > Plastic bin liners
- > Reusable containers of 500-650 microns that cannot be crumpled or tampered with



## The confusion

- > Senior BMC officials have assured hoteliers that they won't be penalized for using recyclable plastic, for now
- > Inspectors on the ground have been taking action though
- > Inspectors want clarity from environment ministry on what is banned and what isn't

- > State govt is considering excluding such thick containers from the ban

## What is exempted?

- > Retail packaging

“ We have begun to charge patrons more for takeaways in recyclable and reusable plastic. The largest container is for ₹20 and the smallest for ₹2. On an average, a consumer might end up paying ₹8 extra for packaging

AHAR MEMBERS

## BMC action against plastic users

Shops and establishments visited	Plastic seized
<b>6,161</b>	<b>284kg</b>
Fine imposed	No. of establishments that refused to pay fine and were penalized
<b>₹3.2L</b>	<b>9</b>

## How are restaurateurs being harassed?

BMC officials forcibly take away plastic products

 **Impose fines of ₹5,000**

