

Top brands told to create fund for recycling plastic

Spot Penalty For Littering Consumers

Chittaranjan.Tembhekar@timesgroup.com

Mumbai:

In another move towards responsible packaging of food and other materials with multi-layered plastic, the state government on Saturday directed major brands to create a reserve fund of Rs25,000 per 1 lakh multi-layered plastic packets/tetrapacks, under the vigilance of the state pollution control board, to recollect, recycle/reuse multi-layered or laminated packs strewn all over public places, in garbage heaps, water bodies and drains. Consumers or retailers littering places with such packets can be penalised on-the-spot by local self-government and police officials.

Sources at a leading brand that is into food and soap packaging told **TOI** the directives would mean the recycling process would be closely monitored by state authorities. This allows the environment ministry to deduct penalties from the reserve fund account under its vigilance if any company flouts recycling norms. "We were contemplating such directives for long. The notices are in tune with the extended producers' responsibility, as enacted by the government, so reserving and monitoring such a fund for recycling is an integral part of business," state environment ministry sources confirmed.

This is expected to control the menace of multi-layered or laminated plastic pouches, for chips, chocolates, biscuits and soaps; and tetra-packs, for beverages and butter milk, that are strewn everywhere, harming the environment. Such plastic is blamed for blocking drains and nullahs during the monsoon, resulting in floods. The state has told multi-layered plastic manufacturers to come up with eco-friendly alternatives within three months, stating that the Centre's deadline for phasing out non-recyclable multi-layer plastic manufacturing facilities is over.

An environment ministry official said such industries will have to deposit 25 paise/ pack in an escrow account before releasing the packed stock in the market.

As per the extended producers responsibility, manufacturers have to recollect and reuse multi-layered or laminated plastic bags or tetrapacks at their recycling facilities. If they are found lying in the open, they can be fined, prosecuted and imprisoned.

The manufacturers will have to co-ordinate or collaborate with rag-pickers, scrap traders and retailers for collection of plastic waste.

TARGET: MULTI-LAYERED PLASTIC

WHAT IS AN ESCROW ACCOUNT?

> It is an account where funds are accumulated for specific disbursement

> The account-holder makes monthly or periodic deposits and authorises the bank or other consented authorities (in this case, MPCB or state environment ministry) to withdraw funds to pay for fixed obligations, such as fines, penalties, taxes, rent, security deposits and insurance

> The fund can be used for any purpose as designated by the authorities



WHAT IS MULTI-LAYERED/TETRA-PACK (LAMINATED) PLASTIC PACKAGING?

> As per Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, manufacturing and use of non-recyclable multi-layered plastic should be phased out in two years



> But a recent regulation issued by the state temporarily allows its use in the absence of biodegradable wrapping or other lamination options

> But it has also asked manufacturers to come up with eco-friendly alternative in three months