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Municipality unprepared for plastic ban, say greens

Thrikkakara Municipal Chairperson spells out measures

Environmental activists have questioned the practicability of the ban on plastic bags below 50 microns in the Thrikkakara municipal area.

“It is an attempt at getting rid of as much plastic as possible from the system,” said the chairperson of the municipality, K.K. Neenu, on Wednesday when others pointed out that the local authorities had banned plastic bags about ten years ago without much effect.

A trader in Thrikkakara said it would be possible to avoid plastic carry bags of below 50 microns. “Most of the packaged items, ranging from ready-to-wear clothes to food articles, come in plastic covers and containers of varying thickness,” said another trader in Thrikkakara. “So, it is a complex issue that needs to be addressed seriously,” he added.

It would be impossible to achieve success and the desired result without prior preparations, said an environmental activist. He said the municipal authority appeared to be unprepared for the ban because it had not done anything so far to find a replacement for plastic carry bags. “Unless such preparations are made and alternatives are provided, people will be forced to rely on plastic bags which come handy to them,” he said.

He also recalled that about a decade ago, the then Thrikkakara panchayat authorities had banned plastic bags. The authorities had also attempted to provide alternatives such as paper, jute and cloth bags. Even then the move had failed and plastic bags continued to be a major problem, hindering proper waste management, he said.

The chairman said the municipal authority was making arrangements to make paper bags at the ward level as an alternative to plastic carry bags. She said traders too had promised to switch over and were cooperating to make the ban a success.

A.R. Dayanandan of Kerala Vyapari Vyavasayi Ekopana Samithi in Kakkanad said the trade body had issued a circular to all traders and shop owners to follow the ban on plastic

bags below the prescribed thickness. “The ‘Haritha Keralam’ (Green Kerala) mission launched by the State government envisages effective waste management. However, the municipal authority must be ready to use the powers vested in it to achieve the goal. It has the authority to punish those violating the ban,” said the environmental activist.