

## Mumbai citizens get 3 months to get rid of plastic

Giving in to the demands of manufacturers, the state government has removed the ban on mini PET bottles less than 500 ml capacity, but stipulated a of Rs 2 on them. Besides, the government has also decided to extend the deadline for consumers and retailers to to three months, from the earlier one-month. To establish a proper recycling mechanism, the government has asked manufacturers to ensure plastic collection machines and crushing machines are set up in malls, five star hotels and high-footfall public places.

Officials said the decision on exempting PET bottles of less than 500 ml capacity from the ban was taken on March 28, after a meeting of the expert committee meeting headed by environment minister Ramdas Kadam.

Senior officials said the state government has decided to include the bottles in the buy-back scheme and the refundable charge has been revised. Buyers will have to pay a refundable charge of Rs 2 above the MRP on PET bottles less than 1 litre capacity, up from Re 1 earlier. The charge for PET bottles with a capacity of more than 1 litre will be Rs 1. This is being done to discourage people from buying smaller bottles and even if they do they have more to lose if they throw it around.

About the extension of deadline to dispose of banned items, sources said chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had insisted that relief be given to retailers as well as manufacturers. However, the expert committee decided on extension only for consumers and retailers.

Hotel and restaurant owners say they may incur huge losses if the government doesn't extend the deadline for them as they still have high inventory of banned cutlery and other items. A rough estimate by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) revealed that over Rs 4-5 crore worth of plastic items are lying in their inventory in the state.

With the avenues for disposal or transport of plastic being limited, the industry is facing a massive write-off, HRAWI sources said. The hoteliers have requested the government to grant them a transition time of 60-90 days to dispose of the items.

HRAWI president Dilip Datwani said, "We are not against the move to ban plastic and welcome the government's decision. But a ban with immediate effect has its consequences, which we are not in a position to deal with at this moment."

An HRAWI office bearer said with the need to do away with all kinds of plastic utilities that have been in use for over two decades, the hotels and restaurants are in a fix over identifying and adopting a suitable replacement.