

A biodegradable bag to end the reign of plastic

'GREEN' INNOVATION As cheap as a plastic bag, the new non-toxic bags could be a viable solution to curb damage done to the environment by use of plastic

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NEW DELHI: Imagine a plastic bag which will vanish completely if you keep it out in the open for some months and will not even harm the environment. It would be akin to a dream of staunch environmentalists which a Delhi resident is set to turn into reality.

Arun Sinha, along with US-based Global Exchange Technologies Inc., is getting GXT ECOgrade Photodegradable Bags — recyclable, non-toxic and degrades by exposure to sunlight — for the vast market looking for a viable option ever since the government has been trying to enforce the ban on plastic.

"This is the right solution to the plastic bag pollution challenge as it breaks down in 40 days, becoming the only viable solution to litter. It completely degrades into a non-toxic residue in less than 240 days. Made from 46 per cent natural materials, these bags emit 35% less greenhouse gas in resin production and 15% less greenhouse gas in bag manufacture," Sinha, 59, said.

A resident of south Delhi's Alaknanda, this St Stephen's College graduate, through his NGO, Society to Create Awareness towards Life & Environment (SCALE), has been on the warpath against plastic for the past 11 years.

"We got into this project because it will benefit the country. The ECOgrade bags - which is ASTM D5272 and D5208 Test Certified in the US and CIPT,

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY OPTION ?

Facts on plastic in the Capital

800 tonnes

Daily plastic generation in Delhi

750 tonnes

Daily dumped at landfill sites

Out of which 80% are plastic bags and packaging materials. Plastic recycling in Delhi is unregistered.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Use cloth or other non-plastic bags for shopping
- Refuse to buy vegetables or fruits that come wrapped in polythene
- Avoid packaging or packaged items
- Don't wrap gifts. If you must, put them in gift bags that can be reused later
- Re-use plastic as much as you can
- Give plastic waste for recycling
- Carry your own water bottle that can be refilled
- No one needs sachets for home or office use. Do not buy sachets of ketchup, coffee or shampoo, even for children's parties.

Chennai and has passed both the US and Canadian heavy metal test according to BPI standards — is the only degradable product which is compatible to the recycling chain. The gamechanger, however, is that it costs around the same as a plastic bag," the activist said adding that once largescale production is started, these bags will be cheaper than plastic ones.

"That is the reason Arun invited us to India. In Delhi, we have already started manufacturing in a factory in Bawana,"



■ Arun Sinha and Manas Bob Chatterjee with the new photodegradable bags in New Delhi.

VIRENDRA SINGH GOSAIN/HT

said Manas Chatterjee, president and CEO of Global Exchange Technologies Inc. They plan to meet chief minister Sheila Dikshit to give her an overview of the ECOgrade bags.

In 2009, the Delhi government banned use of plastic bags on the directive of the Delhi High Court. Last year, the government also banned its manufacturing. Manufacturers moved the high court against the ban. The Delhi pollution control committee is awaiting a court verdict. The government

hopes the ban will return, at least on the use of plastic bags.

"We support the ban but a viable alternative should be there; something which is neither expensive, nor harmful. The ban on plastic bags can cost over 1,00,000 jobs. Around 400 units will be closed. This will bring in a tremendous amount of social stress. We will create job opportunities in Delhi and the NCR and provide support of over ₹1000 crore in economic activity and tax revenue," Sinha added.