

'Banned plastics sold at 85% of surveyed sites in Mumbai'

Malathy Iyer & Richa Pinto | TNN

Mumbai: Mumbai continues to drown in single-use plastic more than three years after a national ban, with prohibited plastic items still being used or sold at 85% of the surveyed locations in the city.

A field study by NGO Toxics Link, conducted between April-Aug 2025 across 560 locations in Mumbai, Delhi, Guwahati and Bhubaneswar, found 84% of all surveyed sites on an average used banned plastic products. Mumbai (85%) ranked just behind Bhubaneswar (89%) and Delhi (86%).

The NGO found single-use plastic bags at juice shops, wholesale markets and street vendors in Mumbai. Around half the businesses surveyed at railway platforms, malls, tourist spots and metro stations were handing out plastic bags. At religious sites, the problem was more severe, with 90% of the surveyed locations distributing the banned bags.

"The continued presence of banned plastic items in a majority of locations suggests that enforcement remains inconsistent," said Toxics Link director Ravi Agarwal. "Unless implementation improves and the supply of these products is controlled, the ban will not effectively address plastic littering and pollution," he said.

City-based environmentalist Rishi Aggarwal said, "Plastics have become as common as oxygen. In the quick-turnaround economy, convenience overrules everything else."

Aggarwal said people seem to be choosing convenience over health and concern for the planet. "Tea and coconut water are given out by vendors in single-use plastic bags, but it doesn't seem to deter users. BMC officials said the civic body registers at least 15 cases in each of its 24 wards daily. Deputy municipal commissioner (special) Vinayak Vistpute, who oversees BMC action on the ban on single-use plastic bags, said, "Our staff routinely carries out action. We also conduct awareness campaigns to highlight single-use plastics are not good for the environment." Some BMC officials said taking action against those in the informal sector, such as hawkers, becomes difficult as adequate police protection is needed. However, Dayashankar Singh, president, Azad Hawkers Union, said they are forced to offer single-use bags by customers. "If production is stopped," he said, "their use would fall sharply."

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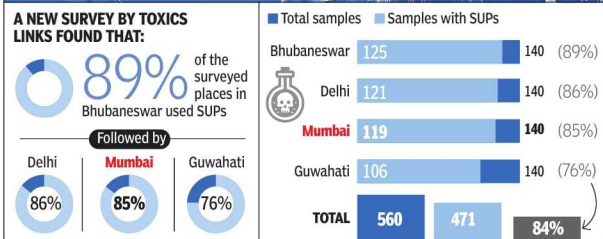
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THE FOREVER CHEMICALS: TOTALLY TOXIC

- Plastic is lightweight, durable, resistant to water and heat, and cost-effective
- It's used in almost every sector of the economy, including automobiles, agriculture, aviation, healthcare, industry, pharmaceuticals, and food
- Single-use plastics (SUPs) are plastic products manufactured using fossil fuels and designed for a single use before being discarded
- They are commonly used for packaging as food containers, water bottles, soft drink bottles, detergent bottles, plastic bags, pipes, flooring, windows, medicine bottles, cereal liners, disposable cutlery, foam cups, among others
- The major concern is that SUPs are non-biodegradable; they degrade to microplastics and contaminate water, soil, and air, entering the food chain and human body
- Phthalates (used as plasticisers in plastics and found in many fragrances) are known endocrine-disrupting chemicals that mimic hormones and cause health problems
- Bisphenol A (BPA) can disrupt reproductive function



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'Kamathipura redevpt work orders this wk'

Mumbai: The state gov't will issue work orders for the Kamathipura redevelopment project this week and work will begin at the site in two months, said junior home minister Pankaj Bhojvar in the assembly on Wednesday.

He said it will be declared a "vital project" by gov't. Bhojvar was replying to a calling attention motion moved by Congress MLA Amin Patel, who said despite several assurances given by gov't, the project has been delayed due to red tape.

The minister said the cluster redevelopment of cessed and non-cessed buildings in the area will provide relief to 8,000 families. He said the work has experienced a slight delay since the contractor and the developer's appointment owing to "certain administrative reasons". —Chaitanya Marpakwar

Siddhivinayak theft: 2 more held

Mumbai: Dadar police on Wednesday nabbed two more staffers of Siddhivinayak temple, Akash Malik and Mahendra Bhavij, for allegedly stealing from its donation box, taking the total number of arrests to eight. Each allegedly stole at least Rs 10,000. Malik and Bhavij were remanded in two days of police custody. TNN

After fatal crash, minor posted online about 'small accident'

Pradeep Gupta

Kalyan: The minor apprehended for the Kalyan hit-and-run death of businessman Srinivas Tandle had posted on social media soon after the crash that he had had a "small accident" and feared being scolded by his father. The post was later deleted.

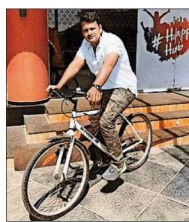
Tandle's brother, Ganesh, said he had picked up cycling that very day in the hopes of getting fitter. Locals said many motorists speed and perform stunts on the incomplete stretch of Kalyan's Ring Road, which has led to accidents, including one less than a month ago.

Police said Tandle, the owner of multiple garments stores in Kalyan, had borrowed a bicycle from a friend two days before the accident. CCTV footage showed that while he was cycling on the road around 8pm, a car being driven at high speed swerved, crashed into him and sped away. Locals alerted Khadakpada police, who rushed Tandle to a nearby private hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. Police tracked down the car and found it in the parking lot of the building in which the 17-year-old's family lives. The vehicle had minor damage.

Ganesh said the CCTV footage showed that the car was being driven recklessly.

Builder on bike knocked over by one vehicle, run over by another

Kalyan: A 35-year-old builder was killed and his brother injured after a vehicle knocked them off their two-wheeler and another vehicle ran over them in Kalyan early on Wednesday. Mahatma Phule police said Ahmed Shakil Khan and Sikandar Khan (26), who assisted their father in his construction business, were returning home from Kalyan station. As they neared Valdhuni flyover around 2am, an unidentified vehicle hit their bike, causing them to lose their balance. Moments later, another vehicle crashed into them. Ahmed died on the spot. Sikandar fractured a hand. Passersby alerted police. Sikandar was undergoing treatment at a private hospital. Senior police inspector Baliram Singh of Mahatma Phule police station said an FIR has been lodged and teams are using CCTV footage to trace the accused. —Pradeep Gupta



Victim Srinivas Tandle

While demanding strict action, a family friend, Vimal Thakkar, urged Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation to expedite the pending Ring Road work and enhance safety measures to prevent more accidents. Outraged locals, especially walkers and cyclists who use the stretch daily, echoed him, and sought installation of additional speed breakers, CCTV cameras and police barricades to improve safety.

On Feb 21, a 50-year-old man sustained serious injuries after a car hit him on the same stretch. Police took action against three persons and got their driving licenses cancelled.

The Ring Road project is being developed in multiple phases by MMRDA. Work on the stretch between Barave and near Vadavali bridge has been stalled for the past two years owing to land acquisition issues. As a result, a significant portion of the road remains partially closed and is frequently used by residents for walking and cycling.

A bag unit at Agripada which employed 18 migrant workers is left with just 2, as Bhisss or Bissis which offer low-cost meals have shut

and zari units in crammed rooms in Madanpura, Dharavi and Govandi. These are low-income groups who pay Rs 500 for two meals a day for six days (Monday to Saturday) a week.

Have access but not switched to PNG? Govt to cut LPG supply after 3 months

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New Delhi: In a bid to wean consumers away from LPG, gov't has decided to stop after three months the supply of cylinders to households that have access to piped natural gas (PNG) but have shied away from taking a connection.

LPG supply will not be stopped if the authorised entity issues a no-objection certificate stating that providing a PNG connection is technically not feasible.

Gov't's move comes amid LPG shortage due to imports being impacted by the West Asia war. India imports about 60% of its LPG requirement, with nearly 90% of it coming from West Asian countries through Strait of Hormuz. Although about half of the requirement of liquefied natural gas (LNG)—which is converted into PNG and compressed natural gas (CNG) and also used by fertiliser and petrochemical units, industries and power plants—is also imported, officials said its supplies remain comfortable due to diversified sourcing and can be ramped up.

The move will help free up LPG supplies from areas with pipeline connectivity and divert them to regions facing shortages. A senior gas company official said even rented houses where owners have not taken PNG connections and tenants currently use LPG will have to switch. "Gas is also a utility akin to electricity and water. The owner does not have a choice but to take a PNG connection," the official said.

Petroleum ministry officials said city gas distribution



Street food vendors queue up for commercial LPG cylinders in Vashi

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BJP opposes plan for town hall at Azad Maidan again

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Mumbai: The BJP in the BMC opposed the civic administration's proposal to construct a town hall at the gymkhana grounds near Azad Maidan during the civic standing committee meeting held on Wednesday, and demanded that the site be used to build a new, larger civic hall to address space constraints faced by 232 corporations. This is for the fourth time that the party has opposed the plan.

The proposal, prepared by the civic body, was repeatedly placed before the standing committee for approval, but each time was kept on hold. At Wednesday's meeting, the proposal was sent back to the administration.

The plan envisioned a govt-backed town hall, described as a formal civic auditorium designed to host public dialogue. The project was also conceived as a tourist attraction, featuring a glass dome and a viewing gallery offering panoramic views of the surrounding heritage precinct. A rooftop cafeteria was part of the proposal.

To remain in harmony with the heritage character of the area, the structure's height was planned to be proportionate, ensuring it does not obstruct the visibility or aesthetics of nearby historic landmarks. Therefore, a ground-plus-four-storey building that would house the Town Hall, along with restaurants, and would be accessible to the general public.

During discussions, BJP leader in the BMC Ganesh Khankar objected to the plan, arguing that the prime location opposite the BMC headquarters should be reserved for a full-fledged municipal hall. Khankar said the current civic house was inadequate, forcing corporators to function in cramped conditions, with limited seating for even civic officials and journalists attending.

Standing committee chairman Prabhakar Shinde of the BJP also said that the administration was bound to make a plan that benefits everyone.

With the proposal referred back, officials said they would need to appoint a consultant to suggest how the changes could be accommodated.

Mum-Surat 'local' trains with toilets being explored

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Surat: Suburban train-type services between Mumbai and Surat are being explored as a long-term plan, with Western Railway (WR) set to add two additional platforms at Surat station as part of its ongoing redevelopment project to enable such operations in the future, sources said.

At present, a Virar-Surat mainline electric multiple unit (MEMU) service and long-distance trains link the regions, indicating latent demand for commuter-oriented travel on the corridor.

Officials said instead of conventional suburban EMU locals, future services are likely to rely on upgraded MEMU trains, which are better suited for longer intercity distances and come equipped with passenger amenities such as toilets.

The railways is also exploring the possibility of introducing Namoo Bharat trains—featuring a mix of AC and non-AC coaches—on the route. WR has already rolled

out Namoo Bharat services on the Ahmedabad-Bhuj sector and a similar model could be evaluated for Mumbai-Surat.

Sources said Vande Metro could be another option. Built on the same platform as Vande Bharat Express, it is a self-propelled train designed for short-distance intercity travel. Unlike Vande Bharat, which is capable of hitting 160kmph, its limit is 130kmph, making it more suitable for regional operations.

Vande Metro is also intended to replace existing MEMUs on Indian railways, offering a Metro-like travel experience with both seating and standing options. A 12-coach rake can accommodate around 1,150 seated passengers and about 2,058 standing commuters.

The proposed suburban train-type services are expected to be taken up after completion of additional platforms at Surat station, which are part of the Rs1,477-crore redevelopment project. Nearly 45% of the phase 1 work has been completed and the target deadline is 2027.

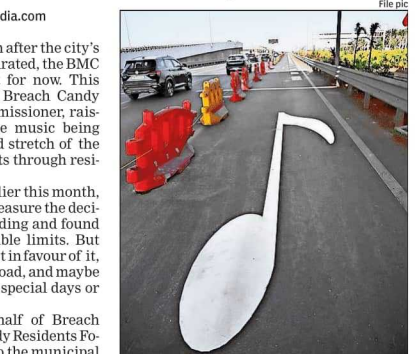
After complaints, BMC to barricade melody road

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Mumbai: More than a month after the city's first melody road was inaugurated, the BMC has decided to barricade it for now. This comes after residents from Breach Candy wrote to the municipal commissioner, raising strong objections to the music being played along the northbound stretch of the city's coastal road, which cuts through residential neighbourhoods.

A BMC official said, "Earlier this month, we asked the contractor to measure the decibel levels at the nearest building and found that it was within permissible limits. But then, as many residents aren't in favour of it, we decided to barricade the road, and maybe we will keep it open only on special days or during weekends."

Nandini Chabria, on behalf of Breach Candy ALM and Breach Candy Residents Forum, said, "We are grateful to the municipal commissioner and the coastal road team for acknowledging and addressing the concerns of Breach Candy residents, who were subjected to the continuous 'Jai Ho' noise 24/7 for over a month." Kavita Chawla, a Breach



The musical initiative was launched on Feb 12

Candy resident whose home faces the coastal road, said that this prompt action by the BMC has come as a big relief to them.

EV charging stn launched on Mum h'way

Mumbai: Tata Power launched its first 180 kW ultra-fast EV charging station on Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway to strengthen intercity electric mobility and make long-distance travel faster and more convenient for electric vehicle users.

The charging station went live at Vithal Kamat Restaurant in Durbes on NH-48. Tata Power said it is a key addition to India's growing EV infrastructure on one of the country's busiest highway corridors and aimed to reduce charging time while improving ease and reliability. TNN

LPG crunch: Bhisss eateries for migrant bag, zari workers shut

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Mumbai: The last meal Mohammed Naim cooked at his Byculla-based Bhisss was the dinner before the "Chand Rait" or the evening the new crescent moon on the last day of Ramzan, ahead of Eid, was sighted last week. "When the LPG cylinders' shortage hit, I thought the crisis would end in a few days. But it continued and I had to stop the service and most of my clients have left for home," said Naim.

Derived from the word beers or 20 in Hindi, these Bhisss or Bissis originally catered for workers in unorganised sectors of bag manufacturing



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and zari units in crammed rooms in Madanpura, Dharavi and Govandi. These are low-income groups who pay Rs 500 for two meals a day for six days (Monday to Saturday) a week.

As the Bhisss shut, thousands of migrant workers left for home in Bihar, Jharkhand, UP and West Bengal. Those who are staying back may leave soon if the supply of cooking gas is not restored.

"They cannot afford to eat at restaurants. They prefer to go home rather than stay back and starve," said Abrar Ahmed Shaikh, a bag manufacturer at Madanpura. Shaikh employed 20 workers before the war began on Feb 28, but is now left with just three. "Even these three workers plan to leave. I cannot force them to stay back as arranging for food is almost impossible since there is a 27-day waiting period even for domestic LPG gas cylinders," said Shaikh.

Mohammed Anis would prepare meals for around 400 workers at his Bhisss in Central Mumbai. "I had to shut it a few days ahead of Eid. Like many workers who went home for Eid and did not return, I am at my village in Bahraich (UP). I do not think I will return and resume my business unless the gas cylinders are available," said Anis on phone.

Mohammed Ahsan Hassan, former secretary of Bihar Foundation who knows scores of migrant workers from Bihar in Dharavi, said a "pandemic-like" scenario is emerging. "During the pandemic, migrant workers left as Bhisss and hotels shut. The same situation will hit us if cooking

gas remains unavailable," he said.

Hassan added many roadside vendors would sell ready-to-eat idli sambar in the BKC area. "Now, I do not see any of them. So where will many employees buy their breakfast or snacks from? They will eventually leave the city," said Hassan.

Bhisss owners cited a practical problem in cooking even if coal or charcoal is made available. "Bhisss run from cramped places in slums or chawls. If we cook food at charcoal-fired ovens, the smoke and heat at the tiny places will be unbearable. And we operate from rented places. Owners will not allow to cook meals on coal," said a Bhisss owner

Task force set up to study impact of social media

Mumbai: State has constituted an expert task force to study the impact of social media use among minors and recommend regulatory measures and policy interventions.

The panel will be chaired by additional chief secretary/principal secretary of the school education and sports department, with women and child development department serving as co-chair. Members include senior officials from public health, IT, judiciary, home departments, representatives from academia and schools, like the principal of Bombay Scottish School. —Mahiyar Patel