

Goodbye plastic, hello green

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Keen to recycle your milk cartons and mineral water bottles but didn't know how to? Some of the city's leading business enterprises are taking the initiative with simple solutions

A pack of orange juice might sound healthy to you, not to the planet though. Tetra packs, which are used for packaging perishable food items are known for keeping food extremely fresh and are 100 % recyclable. But most of them end up in trashcans.



A pet bottle recycling machine at a mall in Vashi

RUR (Are You Reducing, Reusing, Recycling) an organisation that works for the purpose of recycling has come up with an innovative programme that will help you recycle these packs and make the planet a lot more greener.

Recently, RUR, in association with retail chain Sahakari Bhandar and Tetra Pak (a company that makes Tetra packs), installed drop boxes for used Tetra packs at Sahakari Bhandar outlets across the city.

The packs are baled and collected with the help of Stree Mukti Sangathan, an association of 3,000 waste pickers and sent to recycle plant Daman Ganga in Vapi, Gujarat.



The drop box at the Sahakari Bhandar outlet at Matunga

These multi-layer packs are made from 75% paper while the rest is polyethylene and aluminium. The packs are ground in a hydraulic mixer and the pulp is separated from the aluminium. The aluminium is hot-pressed and turned into sheets.

From waste to want

Since its inception on World Environment Day in 2010, RUR has collected 2 lakh cans and even donated 23 desks made out of the aluminium sheets to Kedarnath Vidya Prasarini Marathi School, Chunabhatti in 2011.

Monisha Narke, founder of RUR informs, "Every household generates plenty of waste and the journey of this waste to the landfill is very long and destructive. Even if people want to recycle they don't know where to drop of the goods to be recycled to.

We thought through this programme the efforts people take could reach the right destination." Apart from drop boxes, Sahakari Bhandar also hosts educational activities in association with RUR including a 20-minute play, Kachre Ke Khiladi.

Besides, two employees at every Sahakari outlet have been trained to help the customers know about the various benefits of recycling the packs.

RUR has also installed similar boxes at 25 to 30 schools, St Xavier's College, Dhobi Talao and will shortly set up boxes at housing societies to broaden their reach and scope.

For every five packs that you drop you get a free bookmark, for seven; a diary and for 12; a notebook; all made from recycled packs. So other than helping the process of recycling, you also save energy by using recycled paper as it uses 70 % less energy than virgin paper during production.

Water matters most

Packaged water giant Bisleri group has established an initiative to control the growing menace of plastic bottles, a common eyesore across the city.

They have installed a plastic bottle-recycling machine at Vashi's InOrbit mall where plastic bottles, especially mineral water bottles will be crushed into flakes.

These flakes will be used to make new plastic items including carpets, fabrics and car parts. According to Bisleri, this is the first time where such machines have been installed anywhere in India.

Ramesh Chauhan, chairman of Bisleri group reasons, "Rag pickers collect glass bottles, PVC plastic items but not PET plastic bottles used for packaged mineral water as they do not earn money after selling these. So these add to the litter, which go for landfilling.

However, PET bottles can be reused to make new items after recycling them. We decided to install recycling machines at points for people to rid of bottles in a safe way. We installed this machine after receiving a positive response from this mall."

The recycling machine was developed by the joint venture of the technical wing of Bisleri and Bio Crux Company.

The machine, with a recycling capacity of over 10,000 bottles per day has been developed with the highest safety measures so even kids can operate it. Ajay Mishra of Bio Crux added, "There's a sensor in the machine, which ensures only plastic bottles can be crushed."

Bisleri plans to install nearly 5,000 recycling machines across India in the next few years. "These machines will be installed at malls, railway stations, airports, market areas with the help of NGOs, municipal corporations. At least 50 such machines will be seen across Mumbai in 2012," said Chauhan.

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