

L-G VK Saxena orders strict ban on single-use plastics and littering across Ladakh

New enforcement framework provides heavy penalties and authorises district & field level officers to issue challans

Initiative aims to safeguard Ladakh's fragile ecology and preserve its pristine landscape

Leh, June 19: Using or selling “single-use Plastic” and littering at public places in Ladakh will now attract a stringent penalty, with the Lt. Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, ordering a strict ban on identified Single-Use Plastic items across the UT of Ladakh. Now, any individual or commercial establishment and institutions like hotels/eateries, found violating the single-use plastic ban, will be imposed an environmental penalty of Rs 10,000, while littering would attract a penalty of Rs 5,000. Besides, random checks for single-use plastics will be done at the Leh Airport and the entry points to Ladakh.

This comes as a firm, decisive step towards strengthening environmental protection and preserving Ladakh's fragile Himalayan ecosystem that is facing challenges due to the rampant disposal of hazardous single-use plastic and littering in the open, particularly around popular tourist spots.

The approved framework strictly prohibits the use, sale, storage, stocking, distribution, transportation and supply of all identified Single-Use Plastic items, including plastic cutlery, cups, plates, straws, trays, wrapping films, thermocol decorations, plastic flags, plastic stirrers and plastic banners below the prescribed thickness.

Recognising the need for a robust and effective enforcement mechanism, the Lieutenant Governor, for the first time, has also authorised a wide range of district and field-level functionaries to inspect, detect violations, issue challans, and recover penalties for such littering and plastic-related violations. The new enforcement framework also permits inspections, surprise checks, videography, photography, CCTV footage and other legally admissible electronic evidence for initiating proceedings against violators.

The officers authorized to prosecute the violators for littering and plastic-relation violations, include: Sub Divisional Magistrates, Tehsildars, Executive Magistrates, District Officers of the Ladakh Pollution Control Committee, Assistant Directors of the Tourism Department, District Panchayat Officers (DPOs), Block Development Officers (BDOs), Executive Officers Municipal Committees, Range Officers, Foresters and Guards of the Forest Department and the Environment Protection Force comprising of ex-servicemen and wildlife stewards.

L-G Shri VK Saxena said that the ban on Single-Use Plastics and littering is aimed at promoting responsible tourism in Ladakh and ensuring that Ladakh's breathtaking landscapes remain clean, unspoilt and ecologically resilient, despite increasing tourist footfall. He urged locals as well as tourists to refrain from littering and spoiling the serene landscapes of Ladakh.

"Ladakh's pristine environment and natural beauty are our greatest treasures, and it is our collective responsibility to preserve them for the tourists visiting Ladakh. As we strive to develop Ladakh into a world-class tourist destination, we must ensure that development goes hand in hand with environmental responsibility. The strict enforcement against Single-Use Plastics and littering is not merely a regulatory measure, but a commitment to safeguarding Ladakh's ecological heritage and promoting a culture of environmental responsibility and sustainability," said L-G Shri Saxena.

Ladakh, known globally for its pristine landscapes, high-altitude wetlands, glaciers and unique biodiversity, remains particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution due to its fragile ecosystem. Being non-biodegradable, Single-Use Plastics persist in the environment for decades, contaminating soil, air and water resources and causing long-term ecological damage. Improper disposal and burning of plastic waste also release hazardous chemicals and toxic substances, posing serious risks to human health, livestock and wildlife.

Plastic waste entering streams, wetlands and glaciers is adversely impacting water quality and ecological processes, while littering degrades natural habitats and diminishes the aesthetic and environmental value of the region's landscapes.