

Plastic ban scraps lives of many workers

Employers say they will go bankrupt if their factories shut down

Naveen Menezes

BENGALURU, DHNS: As the giant plastic manufacturing machine sits idle, about 10 persons employed at this small-scale unit in Kamakshipalya, fear losing their jobs. The plight of people employed in plastic units in other parts of the city, especially Peenya industrial area is no different. About 5,000 employees in at least 200 plastic manufacturing units are on the verge of losing their jobs.

Munirathnam, who is in his 50s and is a native of Kolar, goes to his firm located in Peenya only to see the shutters down every day. "It's been 15 days since I last worked. The owner has not paid my last month's salary. This is the place where I have been working for the last 20 years. I'm too old to go elsewhere and learn a new job," he said and added that his livelihood was at stake.

"I am not able to send money to my family in Kalaburagi, who depend on me. I have to learn a new job from scratch and work elsewhere for less salary. It's been a month since I have worked," said S T Shantayya, who works for a firm on Magadi Road. His colleague Kokila Tiwari from Uttar Pradesh too is helpless. "I worked here for eight years. It's not easy to shift to a new job at this age," he adds.

Hemanth Raj, who migrated to Bengaluru from Tumakuru, too is helplessly looking for an alternative. "It's possible for the government to provide alternative jobs for those who lose their employment. It has happened all of a sudden. Our owner has asked us to wait for some time. We have no clue where



A grim future awaits these workers at a plastic factory in Bengaluru. DH PHOTO

to go," he says. Rudresh Hari from Hebbur has a similar plight to share. The blanket ban on plastic has also hit the employers badly. Vivekananda S, proprietor of Akshaya Polymers, had ventured into this business two years ago after working elsewhere.

"I took a loan of Rs 40 lakh and bought an extrusion machine. I used to manufacture about 10 tonnes of different types of plastic material. Now, I have downed the shutters. Employees and the banks are after me. I am helpless", he says.

Ashwathnarayan Rao of Shiva Poly Pack in Peenya said that he borrowed money to construct a house and set up the business. The sudden decision to ban plastic has shocked me and my family. I have lot of commitments in terms of money. The government should give time to settle the dues, he said. Suresh N Sagar, Secretary, Karnataka State Plastic Association, said there were about 70,000 persons directly employed with about 450 plastic manufacturing units in the

City. About 1 lakh people are employed indirectly. The sudden plastic ban has sent shock waves among all of us. The government should consider providing grace time of at least one year for employers to recover at least part of their investment and employees to shift to other jobs. We will meet the chief minister and persuade him on withdrawing the ban, he added.

TV Ramachandra, professor at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru said employees should be happy about the plastic ban more than the public. "These people will benefit as they will not be exposed to carcinogenic environment any more and can expect better health," he said.

"The ban on plastic will certainly be a 'boon for the environment'. It is not difficult for the government to provide alternative livelihood to those losing jobs. Plastic will not get into the food chain and cause diseases like cancer. Irrational use of plastic is evident from the accumulation of plastic in the stomachs of street cattle," he said.

Peoplespeak



There are about 450 small and large plastic manufacturing units in Bengaluru employing around 70,000 people directly and more than one lakh people indirectly. Employers have invested crores of rupees on machinery. The government should give one-year grace period so that the manufacturers can recover the investment and switch to other business.

**Suresh N Sagar, secretary,
Karnataka State Plastic Association**

I used to manage my family and look after my two children by working in the plastic manufacturing for in the last eight years. After the ban, the owner has not paid our salaries. It's been difficult to lead our lives.

**Latha Tiptur, worker,
RR Poly Pack, Kamakshipalya**



I earn about Rs 9,000 a month. If I shift and work for a garment factory, they don't even pay Rs 5,000 a month. I have to join some other company as a fresher, but that will not pay much.

**Navin D K, works at a firm near
Magadi Road**

Palike to penalise violators

BBMP Special Commissioner (Solid Waste Management) Subodh Yadav told *Deccan Herald* that the BBMP is working on the modalities to levy penalty on different violations related to plastic ban. "All that we can do is seize the banned goods and levy penalty. However, there is no mechanism in place to calculate the amount of penalty. We are working on it now," he said

