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Karnataka mulls 5% tax on plastic to curb use; CM fetes green citizens

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BENGALURU: The state government is mulling levying a 5% tax on the production and sale of plastic products, chief minister HD Kumaraswamy said at a World Environment Day event organized at the department of forest, ecology and environment here on Tuesday.

“Though there is a ban on plastic, its usage has not come down as anticipated. If we were to impose this extra tax, perhaps we can check the use of plastic,” he said, adding that in the name of development, trees were being felled, land encroached and water bodies shrunk.

The CM was speaking at the event organized by the department of forest, ecology and environment and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB).

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On a day when the world hopes to move one step closer to a more sustainable way of life, Bengaluru can only rue that it has failed miserably in enforcing the plastic ban. Though the ban was introduced two years ago, the city and its stakeholders have made little effort to crack down on the manufacturers and users of plastic bags. Shutting down manufacturing units and loss of jobs is a big price to pay for the benefits. But so be it, for the well-being of the majority is at stake. The chief minister admits the government has failed to implement the ban. It's his chance to do what his predecessors couldn't and make the city a better place.

Kumaraswamy also awarded and felicitated three individuals for their work in conserving environment — TV Ramachandra from the Indian Institute of Science's Energy & Wetlands Research Group, Pamela Malhotra, who with her husband has transformed 300 acres of denuded farmland in Kodagu district into what is probably India's first private wildlife sanctuary, and elephant expert Ajay A Desai were presented with citations and cheques for Rs 1 lakh each. Three organizations were also awarded for their work: the zilla panchayats of Haveri and Udupi districts and Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Limited.

Kumaraswamy went on to say that increasing levels of pollution had led to an increase in the number of diseases, as well as higher temperatures. “If this continues, then future generations will be deprived of pure air and water. Sapling plantation drives conducted by the BBMP and forest department remain largely data or numbers in their files. Each household should plant a sapling and ensure that it grows into a tree,” he said.

Schools, students awarded

The KSPCB also awarded and felicitated schools conducting programmes aimed at making schools environmentally friendly. This year, one school was chosen from each of the seven educational divisions, and presented with Rs 50,000 cash each.

Government High School, Banawasi, Kanakapura taluk, Ramanagara; B Siddannaiah High School, Ballupet, Sakleshpur, Hassan district; Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva High School, Alike, Bantwal taluk, Dakshina Kannada district; Government Higher Primary School, Parasapura, Dharwad; Government Boys Higher Primary School, Chabanur, Vijayapura district; Government Upgraded Higher Primary School, Talur, Siruguppa taluk, Ballari, and Government High School, VK Gudda, Hiriyyur taluk, Chitradurga, were awarded.

In all, 34 school students who won environment themed essay writing and drawing competitions were also awarded.

Davana DS, a Class 4 student of Widia Poorna Prajna School, who bagged first place in a drawing competition, said, "I am very happy about winning. I drew a picture of a cow eating plastic and the earth crying due to pollution."

(Sahana Kiran and Hina Sarvath)