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'Only 6% of total plastic products are banned'

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Madurai Minister for environment K C Karuppanan, at the regional awareness conference for state leaders on "Threats From Toxic Waste in Madurai" in Friday said, "Of the more than 200 plastic items that are under production, the state government has banned only 14 and three plastic items from January 1. These items account for only 6-8% of the total waste items under production."



K C Karuppanan minister for Environment distributing cloth bags at a plastic awareness conference held in Madurai on Friday

The minister said that plastic manufacturers and those employed in the sector will not willingly do what would save it from in less than 10 days. "Except for a few protests by some manufacturers there has not been any opposition to the ban from the time the ban was announced by the chief minister Anand (this year). People are welcoming it," he said and added that use of 40% of such waste items has come down.

The minister also said that state government is working

on generating electricity from solid waste. "Chemical produces 1,000 tonnes of solid waste a day and cities like Madurai produce around 300 to 400 tonnes a day. All these waste is wrapped in plastic carry bags and dumped," he said. Karuppanan added that the government studied successful models in Japan and in a few developed countries, where electricity is generated from solid wastes.

But the cost of production would be cheap to Rs 4.5 per unit

against the Rs 2 to Rs 2.5 at which it is purchased now. Establishing a plant to handle 100 tonnes solid waste would cost Rs 150 crore to Rs 200 crore," he said and added that the government is seriously looking at this option as an effective means for better solid waste management. He expressed concern over the plight of people living near existing dump yards.

Karuppanan said that the ban will turn out to be a boost for agro-based alternatives for the

plastic items. Pappanna Sathyan, member-in-charge for disaster management and regional coordinator for Threats Reduction From Toxic Waste in Madurai and Thiruvananthapuram, said it would be a big opportunity for rural sectors and boost their employment.

Sathyan said that apart from the 14 listed items, people should come forward and voluntarily abstain use of any other thin plastic items they come across. "Something that has on single use plastic items is only the first step, he assumed that the government will soon come out with a solution for multi-layer packing materials used by MNCs. He made an appeal to all political parties to avoid using plastic flags for elections, as it is also banned.

Minister for revenue administration and disaster management, R H Uthayakumar also spoke at the event in which the district collectors and superintendents of police and officials from the districts - Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Sivagangai and Pudukottai, participated.