



Plastic Bags Must Go

This New Year Let's Give Ourselves the Gift of a Clean Nepal

Responding to the two years of continuous campaigning by patriotic Nepali youth, more than 50,000 Nepalis signing a petition in favor of the ban, and following the directive of Parliamentary Committee on Environment Protection (EPC), the Government of Nepal banned plastic bags up to 20 x 35 inches size and plastic bags up to 40 microns thickness in Kathmandu Valley, and plastic bags up to 30 microns thickness in the entire country starting April 14, 2015, that is, Baishak 1, 2072. This is a proud achievement for all of us young volunteers who put in countless hours spreading awareness, promoting greener alternatives, and advocating for plastic bag ban to make our beloved country Nepal, clean.

14 Reasons Why Plastic Bags Must Go

Plastic Bags are BAD for Nepal's Environment

1. They are non-biodegradable and remain in the environment for thousands of years after being used just once. The average period we use them for is a mere 12 minutes.
2. They are a petroleum product. Their usage increases Nepal's contribution to global warming.
3. They interfere with the decomposition of our organic waste in landfills and on streets.
4. When burnt they release poisonous gases into the air we breathe.
5. They are bad for Nepal's farmlands—they harm the health of the soil.
6. They kill animals and birds by entangling and suffocating them.

Plastic Bags are BAD for Nepali Economy

7. 100% of material used in their production is bought from foreign countries. Its purchase takes away precious foreign currency outside Nepal and increases Nepal's trade deficit.
8. They take away the market of locally produced materials like Jute, Cotton, Hemp and others.
9. They create very few jobs in Nepal. Actually their introduction in Nepal took away tens of thousands of jobs within rural Nepal.
10. They add very little 'economic value' within Nepal.
11. They are bad for Nepal's tourism—they have destroyed the beauty of pristine Nepal. Tourists hate the sight of them thrown all around.

Plastic Bags are BAD for Nepali Society

12. Their usage teaches our society, particularly our youth, to indulge in use-and-throw culture.
13. Their excessive usage is destroying the pristine character of our rural hinterlands known the world over otherwise as nature's gift to humankind.
14. They cause street flooding by clogging drains and sewage – a common sight in Nepal.

Myth vs Reality

About Plastic Bag Usage

Myth: Life cannot go on without plastic bags. There is no alternative.	Reality: Life would be beautiful without plastic bags.
There are many alternatives such as bags made of natural materials like jute, cotton and used-newspaper in market today.	
Myth: Plastic bags are very cheap compared to other bags. They are available for free.	Reality: Plastic bags are the most expensive packaging option.
Shopkeepers hide their true cost in the price of the products. A cotton/jute bag worth Rs. 100 replaces 200 plastic bags worth Rs. 500. This makes plastic bags five times more expensive.	
Myth: Billions of rupees invested in the plastic bag industries would be lost.	Reality: Plastic Bags are a very miniscule part of the overall plastic industry. Plastic industry makes most of its money by selling other plastic products.
Global data shows that only 2.5% of the overall 'plastic industry' investment is made in the 'plastic bag industry.'	
Myth: This campaign is trying to ban all plastic products.	Reality: This campaign is asking to ban 'plastic bags' only.
Many other thick-plastic products like plastic bottles are commercially recyclable. Plastic bags are commercially unfeasible to recycle and therefore, a majority of them are not recycled.	
Myth: Banning plastic bags would harm Nepal's economy. It will take away jobs.	Reality: Banning plastic bags is good for Nepal's economy.
Doing so promotes usage of biodegradable bags made of Jute, cotton, hemp, lokta – all of them produced in Nepal. These greener alternatives would produce tens of thousands of additional jobs in Nepal.	
Myth: We cannot throw our waste without plastic bags. We cannot buy wet products like meat without plastic bags.	Reality: We can store/throw our waste better by using re-usable Garbage Bins. We can buy products like meat using re-usable containers.
Experience from other countries, that have banned plastic bags, shows that residents quickly change their habit and start carrying containers to buy wet products like meat, and loose item like lentil and sugar.	
Myth: Banning plastic bags is a foreign agenda.	Reality: Using plastic bags is a foreign agenda. Most of money made in selling plastic bags go outside Nepal to foreign countries.
The Ban order is directed by Nepal's parliament, and is issued by the Ministry of Environment.	

Myth vs Reality About Plastic Bag Usage

Myth: Plastic bags are recyclable. Managing plastic bags is better than banning it.	Reality: Plastic Bags are commercially non-recyclable.
<p>The worldwide experience shows that banning is the only practical solution. Even in the most advanced countries like USA, only less than 7% plastic bags are recycled, with most of them ending up in landfills or oceans.</p>	
Myth: This is an emotional campaign not based on pragmatic thinking.	Reality: This is a well thought-out campaign based on careful thinking and research on global experience.
<p>This campaign has won the approval and support of Nepal's most successful entrepreneurs.</p>	
Myth: Plastic Bags are not banned anywhere in the world.	Reality: Plastic Bags are banned in many countries around the world, including our own neighbors such as China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and many parts of India.
<p>California, the seventh largest economy in the world, recently banned it. European Union has also declared a bold plan to reduce 80% uses of Plastic bags by 2019.</p>	
Myth: The waste collectors would not pick up waste without them being stashed in plastic bags	Reality: The waste collectors prefer plastic-bags getting banned.
<p>By working with waste workers through our "Nagarmitra- the friends of the city" social initiative, we learnt that the waste collectors prefer that households and offices dispose their waste in segregated form directly in their rickshaws, which is easy to practice if Plastic bags are banned.</p>	
Myth: The customers would not buy other bags like cotton/ jute bags.	Reality: The customers happily buy other bags like cotton/ jute bags.
<p>Just in the last two years, we, volunteers, involved with "Hamri Bahini – The Green Angels" initiative, sold 100,000 (1 Lakh) bags to customers in Kathmandu. This proves that customers love alternatives if they are easily available.</p>	
Myth: The retailers would hate the plastic bag ban.	Reality: The retailers are liking the plastic bag ban.
<p>Nepal Retailers Association is officially supporting the campaign against plastic bags.</p>	

Global Reduction Efforts and Lessons

Many countries that have already identified the tremendous benefits associated with eliminating plastic bags are taking strong measures to reduce and ban plastic bag consumption. Here are some examples of countries that are blazing the trail in promoting sustainable lifestyles.

China

In preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games, China prohibited the free provision of plastic bags in all supermarkets and retailers. The ban entails tough fines for violators and provision of goods being confiscated.

Rwanda

Strong political will coupled with community participation has ensured a successful plastic bag ban, which was introduced in 2008. Business owners violating the ban face up to a year in prison and others face hefty fines and travelers entering the country are subject to searches.

Bhutan

The Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan banned the plastic shopping bags in 2007 as a part of its policy to foster Gross National Happiness.

India

Different states have different forms of ban with varying degrees of success. In 2012, New Delhi introduced a blanket ban, which included imprisonment up to five years and fine up to Rs. 1 lakh for violators.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh imposed a nationwide ban in 2002 after plastic bags were found to cause a destructive flood that submerged two-thirds of the entire country for two months, and displaced over 30 million people.

California

California, the seventh largest economy in the world, became the most recent city to impose a ban on plastic bags.

European Union

The EU declared a bold plan to reduce plastic bag usage by 50% by 2017 and 80% by 2019 in all of 28 member countries.

It's very easy to kick our Plastic Bag Habit

Thousands of us have not been using any plastic bags for years now under a pledge, and guess what, we all are doing good! You can kick this habit too! Here is how.

1. Remind yourself to keep a spare foldable bag in your day bag before leaving your home.
2. Keep bags in visible areas such as shoe rack, kitchen, vehicle and office.
3. Remember to take containers, when shopping for meat items and loose items like lentil, sugar, etc.
4. Use two waste-bins at home/office- one for bio-degradable and one for non-biodegradable waste. Don't mix your waste.



This note has been developed by patriotic Nepali youth volunteers to inform the common people of Nepal why government's decision to ban plastic bags is a correct decision. This note attempts to counter the misinformation campaign by unscrupulous elements in our society who want to continue making private profit at the cost of the country's economy and environment.



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'No Thanks! I Carry My Own Bag' campaign, and 'The Gen Nep- Nation First'

youth engagement platform are associated with Himalayan Climate Initiative- a non-profit Nepali civil society organization.