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## Union Ministry to announce scheme to set up plastic parks

Special Correspondent

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CHENNAI: The Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers will soon announce a scheme to set up "plastic parks", on the lines of IT parks, across the country. The planning for the scheme is in the final stages and will be announced within two months, according to Neelkamal Darbari, joint secretary in the Ministry.

"Each park will come up on about 250 acres of land...We want to have at least one such park per State," said Ms. Darbari, speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a workshop on Solid Waste Management held at the Central Institute for Plastics Engineering and Technology here on Wednesday.

She says that the scheme envisages the parks as public-private partnership projects. The parks will be owned and run by Special Purpose Vehicle companies, with the State governments, plastic industry associations and industry consultants all having a stake. Each park will essentially be an industry cluster, with 50 to 100 units. The State governments will need to provide the land, she said.

The Union government will provide a subsidy for common facilities at the parks, including a plastic reprocessing and recycling plant and a waste management system, added Ms. Darbari.

“Wherever there is a plastic industry cluster, there must be a recycling component also,” she said.

The Ministry is also in the early stages of planning for a scheme to involve entrepreneurs in collecting and recycling plastic waste.

If there is an incentive, businessmen can be motivated to create wealth from waste, rather than leaving the problem of plastic waste collection to government agencies, she said. The Ministry is preparing a proposal to present to the Cabinet soon.

“A ban on plastics is not the way to go...It is not viable,” said Ms. Darbari.

“What is needed is a mass movement toward recycling.”

Chennai Corporation Commissioner Rajesh Lakhoni also said that a total plastics ban was not a feasible option for the city, despite demands by activists. “It is not fashionable to look pro-plastic...but banning plastics is not the solution,” he said.

He also feels recycling is the answer, but insists that the public must be educated on source-segregation of waste before recycling can be done completely and effectively.

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Under pressure, the Corporation did ban plastics from the Marina Beach, he said. In the fifteen days since the ban took effect, it has managed to remove about 75 per cent of the plastics from the beach, he said.

He expects to show 100 per cent implementation of the ban within the next two months.