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## Local bodies asked to act on plastic bag sale

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) department has written to district collectors asking them to direct local bodies to take action against vendors around temples who use bags that are less than 40-microns thick. This is part of its efforts to prevent the use of plastic bags inside temples.

Around 50 large temples, including Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Temple, Kapaleeswarar temple and Thiruverkadu Karumariamman temple, have implemented a ban on use of plastic bags on their premises.

“The *archakas* have been directed not to accept offerings with plastic covers. The devotees are also being sensitised so they do not bring flowers and other offerings in plastic bags,” said P. Dhanapal, commissioner, HR&CE.

Temples have also procured bamboo baskets that are

provided to devotees who are unaware of the plastic ban inside temples. However, shops outside the temples continue to give flowers to devotees in plastic bags.

“In a few places like the Vadapalani Murugan temple, vendors have agreed to provide baskets that can be reused. But in other temples, they are not toeing our line. Local bodies have to take action against such vendors, but they haven’t, which is why we have written to collectors asking them to direct the civic bodies to initiate action,” he said. Sources in the Chennai Corporation said the civic body would initiate action if the HR&CE wrote to it.

“We conduct periodic raids among wholesalers, dealers and distributors and seize bags that are less than 40 microns thick. We target the source rather than roadside vendors. If need be, we can still conduct a specific drives around places of worship,” he said.

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