

News

The Kerala High Court prohibits single-use plastic in hilly regions and plastic bottles at formal occasions like weddings.



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On Tuesday, the Kerala High Court issued an order restricting the use of plastic bottles at large events, such as weddings and important government celebrations, and outlawing single-use plastic in highland tourist regions. **[State of Kerala v. Suo Motu]**.

The prohibition will go into force on October 2, 2025 (Gandhi Jayanthi), according to a Division Bench of Justices **Bechu Kurian Thomas** and **P Gopinath**. This will allow the State administration time to take the required actions.

The Court made it clear that the ban on plastic bottles extends to soda bottles that hold less than two liters and water bottles that hold less than five liters.

"The State's hilly tourist areas listed in the table in the order, i.e., those hilly destinations with high foot traffic, are prohibited from using and selling single-use plastics, such as plastic food containers, plastic plates, plastic cups, straws, plastic sachets, and plastic bakery boxes." The Court ruled that two-liter plastic soft drink bottles and five-liter plastic water bottles would not be subject to this prohibition.

In order to address trash management issues, particularly in tourist regions, the High Court brought a suo motu case that resulted in the directives.

The Court's main directives are listed below:

- Single-use plastics such as food containers, plates, cups, straws, sachets, and bakery boxes are prohibited from being sold or used in hilly tourist destinations with heavy traffic; Water bottles with a five-liter capacity and soft drink bottles with a two-liter capacity or more are excluded.
- In Kerala, straws, plates, cups, silverware, and plastic water bottles with a capacity of less than five liters, as well as soft drink bottles with a capacity of less than two liters, are prohibited at all Central and State government events.
- Venues such as hotels, restaurants, auditoriums, and weddings are also prohibited. The Court further stated that the license requirements for these facilities must include a ban on the use of single-use plastic.
- In hilly tourist destinations, district administrations and local self-government organizations must erect water kiosks and provide alternatives, such as copper or glass water bottles, for sale at appropriate distances.
- Travelers should be urged to utilize reusable bottles and refrain from bringing single-use plastic to mountainous locations.
- In addition to ensuring that plastic debris is regularly collected from these water bodies, the state and municipal governments must prohibit the disposal of plastic garbage into rivers, canals, and backwaters.
- To promote alternatives and raise awareness of the negative consequences of single-use plastic, state authorities must launch campaigns in print and visual media.
- Strict adherence to the Plastic Waste Management Rules and associated legislation is required throughout the state.

The Court emphasized that every citizen has an obligation to preserve and improve the environment and that every individual has a fundamental right to a clean environment.

The Bench had previously stated that, in light of the increasing number of tourists, it was time to outlaw single-use plastic in mountainous regions to save them from becoming landfills.

Along with the assistance of local organizations, the Pollution Control Board, and the State Police, the Court today instructed the Chief Secretary and the Special Secretary to the Local Self Government Department to coordinate the execution of the recently mandated plastic ban measures.

The State was represented by Special Government Pleader Unnikrishnan, the Cochin Corporation by Standing Counsel Janardhana Shenoy, and the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation by Standing Counsel Suman Chakravarthi.

Additionally, via video conference, the Special Secretary of the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) Anupama TV (IAS) made an appearance.