

# Manufacturers & govt should come together to solve the plastic problem

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There has been a narrative along these lines for a while now – wherein it is led to believe that plastics by themselves are not to be blamed, but it is the collective behaviour of the individuals or not being responsible in the way they manage their plastic waste that leads to littering.

Let us project that thinking on a universal scale, and imagine a world where con-

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sumers everywhere who are the end-consumers of plastic, do not litter. They are responsible enough to always throw their waste in the correct bin (assuming such bins are always accessible). What happens next? Are we sure that the bins are regularly emptied and taken to the correct facilities for recycling? Are they able to trace the waste journey once it leaves their ho-



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**STOP THE PLASTIC SPILL:** Discarded plastic lands up as 'Ocean Bound Plastic' or degrades into micro-plastic because there is a lack of viable solutions and infrastructure for recycling or reuse

uses? Do they have assurance that the plastic waste is not aggregated (or even mixed with wet waste) and ultimately dumped in a landfill? Were they given choices in terms of alternatives to plastic and given full information about the dangers of plastic waste?

Each year, the global plastics industry produces 300 million tonnes of plastic. A half of this is single-use plastic, such as shopping bags,

cups and straws, of which only 9% is recycled. The discarded plastic lands up as 'Ocean Bound Plastic' or degrades into micro-plastic because there is a lack of viable solutions and lack of infrastructure for recycling or reuse.

For a sustainable future, plastic products need to be better aligned with the circular economy. Today, the responsibility of the manufacturer often ends where the

product leaves the factory gates. However, the need of the hour is for product manufacturers to encompass the entire life cycle — including end-life and recycling — as the basis for optimising the design of sustainable processes. To this end, manufacturers should work more closely with waste management partners and recyclers.

The government, too, plays a critical role in solving the problem by drafting policies, which will discourage single use plastic and promote reusable alternatives. The consumer is the last peg in the entire chain and not the owner of the plastic pollution problem. If we want to address the problem at the root cause, we look to the industry, who along with the government, has the resources to design and implement solutions to mitigate the problem.

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