

Plastic ban pioneer Himachal bags Prime Minister's award

Ashwani Sharma Posted online: Thu Apr 21 2011, 00:21 hrs

Shimla : Himachal Pradesh's polythene ban has finally won the coveted Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration, for the year 2009-10.

The award will be presented by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on Thursday, the Civil Services Day, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

The communication informing the state's Chief Secretary Rajwant Sandhu about Himachal being selected for the Award under the 'Organization Category' for a novel initiative, viz 'Sustainable Plastic Waste Management in Himachal Pradesh' was received here last evening from Ramesh Misra, Union Secretary (Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances) in the Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances.

Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal, currently in Delhi, confirmed the news. He claimed the award was a result of a sustained effort of the government agencies, citizens, NGOs, students and traders — who supported the initiative to make Himachal Pradesh a polythene-free state.

"Many states have followed the footsteps of Himachal Pradesh. It's an example, perhaps in South Asia, when the state showed practical results of the ban, collection of waste polythene, recycling and its end-use in the development schemes, especially road construction, to save the environment from its ill-effects. The time has come when the Centre should take the call and ban polythene," Dhumal told The Indian Express over phone.

A state government team comprising the state's additional secretary (Environment, Science and Technology) Sarojini Gangu Thakur and Director Environment Protection, Nagin Nanda, will receive the awards from the Prime Minister tomorrow, said a spokesman here.

The ban on production, storage, use, sale and distribution of all types of polythene bags made of non-biodegradable materials was imposed on October 2, 2009. The government mobilised citizens, tourists and traders to switch over to jute, paper and cotton bags. It really worked fast as a series of public campaigns kept the pressure on polythene users to discard those carry bags .

Only a few months back, the government included all kinds of plastic materials, such as disposable plates, cups and glasses, in the ambit of the ban. Water bottles are also discouraged by installing water dispensers at vantage points in tourist towns.