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McDonald's outlets in south and west India have been eliminating single-use plastic since 2017 (Priyanka Parashar/Mint file)

## Amid Modi push, companies take steps to eliminate single-use plastic

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- India is likely to impose a nationwide ban on plastic bags, cups, small bottles, straws and some types of sachets next month
- Among the steps taken by firms are introduction of alternatives to plastic in their stores and committing to recycling PET waste



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restrict use of single-use plastic in the country to tackle the rising threat of pollution and health hazards, more and more companies are limiting the use of such items.

India is likely to impose a nationwide ban on plastic bags, cups, small bottles, straws and some types of sachets next month.

Among the steps taken by companies are introduction of alternatives to plastic in their stores and committing to fully recycling PET waste.

On Wednesday, Westlife Development Ltd. (WDL), that runs over 300 McDonald's restaurants in West and South India through its wholly-owned subsidiary Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt. Ltd., said it has substituted all single-use customer-facing plastic with eco-friendly and biodegradable alternatives.

McDonald's outlets in West and South India will now offer wooden cutlery (ie spoons, stirrers, knives and forks). The fast-food chain has also replaced plastic cups with paper cups, besides introducing bio-degradable lids for hot and cold beverages. The company said it has introduced straws made from corn starch extract and will eventually replaced them with paper straws.

Earlier this week Parle Agro, the maker of Frooti and Appy Fizz, said it will invest Rs50 crore over the next three years to implement a PET plastic waste management (PWM) program. Parle Agro plans to achieve 100% recycling of plastic waste starting October 2019, it said in a statement on Monday.

Last week, some of the country's

largest consumer goods firms such as Coca-Cola, Diageo, Bisleri, PepsiCo among others announced their participation in a plastic waste management entity called "Karo Sambhav". The entity has been developed by PACE or Packaging Association for Clean Environment, an industry body, which will work towards recycling packaging material, collection of post-consumer packaging, work across a network of recovery facilities, and converge resources currently being used by its existing members to tackle plastic packaging waste material.

Parle Agro has tied up with the Indian Pollution Control Association (IPCA) and Nepra to collect and recycle 100% of its PET bottle waste. The plastic recycled by the company plastic will be utilised by textiles and other non-allied industry segments. In all, Parle Agro will facilitate an annual collection of 310 crore PET bottles, along with its waste management partners, totalling to nearly 50,000 metric tonnes of PET waste. "We have set an ambitious goal to immediately become 100% PET waste free company. This not only requires us to accelerate many of our ongoing environment and sustainability but also double our investments," Nadia Chauhan, MD and CMO, Parle Agro said in a statement on Monday.

McDonald's outlets in south and west India have been eliminating single-use plastic since 2017.

"While the Government announced 2nd 2019 as the deadline for single-use plastic elimination across the country, Westlife Development has been proactively eliminating plastic at its restaurants since 2017," the

company said in a statement on Wednesday.

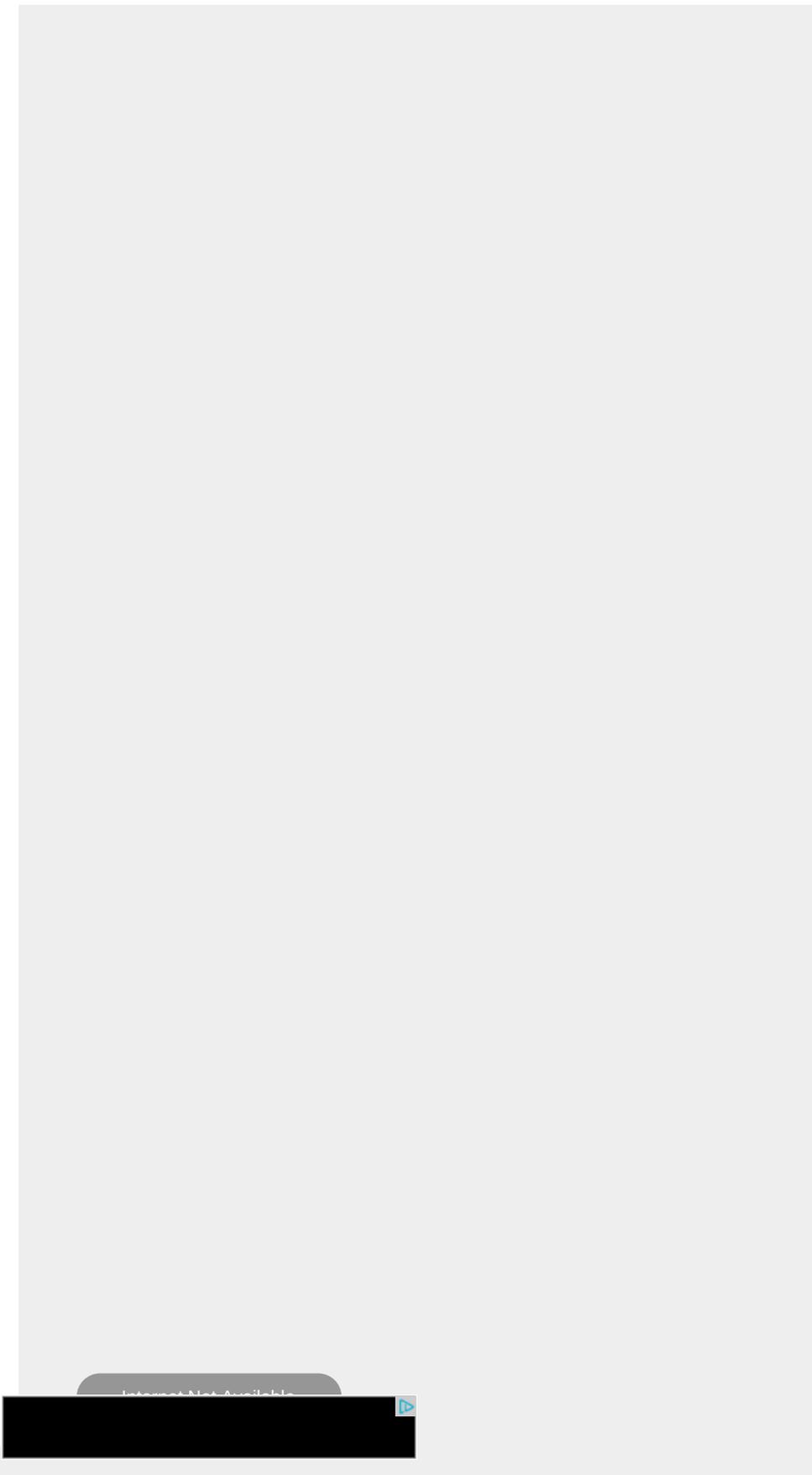
Earlier this year local arm of American coffee chain Starbucks also announced plans to move to compostable and recyclable packaging solutions across its stores in India by June 2019 as part of the coffee chain's global plans to switch to sustainable packaging use in its stores. At Starbucks, consumers will now be offered compostable straws, lids, take-away cups, wooden cutlery and stirrers, and even carry bags and napkins from recycled paper.

While a lack of clarity around what constitutes plastic persists, over the last few days companies and industry bodies have met various government ministries to discuss feasible solutions and drive home the point that substituting plastic with other materials such as glass or aluminium could drive up costs apart from having a greater carbon footprint. In fact, companies that use PET bottles and jars have maintained that such products are nearly 90% recyclable and therefore items such as 200 ml bottles must be excluded from the list of items that could be phased out.



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