

## Situation in the Country on Single Use Plastic Control during Corona Pandemic.

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Majority of the polythene industries are not in operation due to prevailing situation in the country. The whole sale market in People's Park and Pettah discontinued the operations obeying the curfew enforced by the Government in order to maintain social distances to control the COVID 19 pandemic disease spread across the island.

The demand for shopping bags could not be met with the limited available stocks. The demand for shopping bags in the market is to pack the essential consumer goods such as dry foods to be distributed by government and other marketing agencies. Companies are releasing the available stocks of shopping bags to the market.



However, the demand for lunch sheets are remarkably limited because of packing cooked meals at restaurants or by government and company workers using lunch sheets are not widely practiced. In the meantime, there is a demand for LDPE polythene film products from the health sector for preparation of PPEs for hospital Doctors, Nurses, PHIs and other staff and storing clinical wastes. Present stocks are released by the manufacturing companies to meet the demand for the time being. The LDPE and allied raw materials already imported are still in the harbor waiting for clearing.

The manufacturer and the supplier of biodegradable lunch sheets confirmed that their products are available in SATHOSA outlets and they could meet the demand with the currently available stocks and once it is permitted to operate the factory the production could be re-commenced with the already imported primary forms of PLA.

Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Minister of Finance, Economic and Policy Development under the provisions of Imports and Exports (Control) Act, no. 1 of 1969, published a gazette notification bearing No. 2171/5 dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020 on temporary suspension of importing a series of non-essential goods which includes primary forms of polythene (i.e. High-Density Polythene, Low density polythene and linear low-density polythene) under the HS code 39.01. Also, it has been suspended import of polythene films which are less than 40 micron in thickness. This temporary suspension of importing these plastic items will affect till 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The regulation tries further strengthen the implementation efforts of present Orders published under the National Environmental Act in 2017 on prohibition of manufacture, sale, offer for sale, exhibition or issue free of charge of polythene lunch sheets and HDPE shopping bags which re considered as single use plastic items. Apart from that the manufacture of LDPE shopping bags will undergo material scarcity in the market and will result in valuing the traditional multiple time use bags for shopping. Also there will be more orientation in the recycling industry towards post-consumer plastic waste based supplementary product alternatives to meet the consumer's demand.

*Sources of Information: Traders in People's Park, Chairman of Polythene Manufacturer's and Recyclers Association, Biodegradable lunch sheet manufacturers and distributors, Department of Import and Export.*