

Hyderabad gets its first zero waste grocery store

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[Jyoti and Pankaj Sancheti, and Pratibha Jain](#) | Photo Credit: G Ramakrishna

Nestled in the bylanes of Karkhana, Secunderabad, is a small and unassuming store that you might miss while driving by, unless you notice the name painted in bold letters — the 'Zero Waste Eco-Store'. The store opened earlier this month and has been drawing a steady trickle of customers from the neighbourhood and other parts of town, thanks to word-of-mouth publicity. Step in and you can shop for a lot of your home needs, but remember to take your own bags, bottles and containers. If you aren't carrying these, the store stocks a few cloth bags, bottles and paper covers for a price. The store has a stringent no-plastic rule and is happy to pack all your essentials — rice, pulses, oils, cleaners et al — in paper covers, cloth bags and containers. Goa, Chennai and Bengaluru among a few other cities, have similar no-plastic grocery stores where customers are encouraged to get their own non-plastic packaging materials and this is the first such



initiative in Hyderabad.

Zero Waste Eco-Store at Karkhana, Secunderabad | Photo

Credit: G Ramakrishna Pankaj Sancheti, his wife Jyoti and sister Pratibha Jain are the force behind the store, along with two other partners Suvibha Nolkha and Namrata Baldwa. A chartered accountant by profession, Pankaj lived in Chennai until recently and used to shop at Ecoindian, The Zerowaste organic store. When he moved to Hyderabad three months ago, he was disappointed at not finding something similar and decided to open one.



[The Zero Waste Eco-Store](#) | Photo Credit: G Ramakrishna

At the moment, Zero Waste Eco-Store stocks around 150 products and will gradually step it up to 300. Sourcing products wasn't easy, Pankaj confesses, "Suppliers of groceries, even those who sell in bulk, have gotten used to packaging in plastic. We had to find those who were willing to sell in non-plastic packaging and we were particular about quality. It took some time." Rows of large glass jars stock pulses, flours, tea, coffee, and oils at the store. There are a range of home-made nibbles as well. "Some of these snacks are made at our home and for a few things that we source from others, we did a check to ensure good quality ingredients and hygiene," says Pratibha. Pickles, spreads, preserves, honey and hand-made soaps are sourced from those who similarly toe the line of eco-conscious packaging. Household cleaning liquids at the store are sourced from those who supply for hospitals. "They were selling in bulk to hospitals and

were game to sell without plastic packaging. There's a considerable cost difference while sourcing from such sellers," says Pankaj. On an average, cleaning liquids sold at the store cost ₹30 to 40 less per litre without packaging. But how does the store ensure quality, especially in case of unpackaged grains, pulses or oil, where there could be a greater chance of adulteration? "We only sell what we buy for our own consumption," says Pankaj, adding that the oils, for instance, are branded ones bought in large tins and then transferred to glass dispensers at the store. Soon, the store will also stock cold-pressed oils.



Some of the home cleaning liquids at the store, that can be packaged in bottles | Photo Credit: G Ramakrishna

Zero Waste Eco-Store also stocks biodegradable plates, packaging containers and tea cups that can be used for ordering takeaways at restaurants. One can also find clay pots and pans, yoga mats made of natural rubber and cork, and bamboo brushes here. The store plans to have a Buyers and Makers club, and organise periodic workshops for soap making and other activities. "You take what you make. It's not tough to make your own soaps, the difficulty often lies in sourcing ingredients. We make that possible. Participants can be assured of chemical-free ingredients," sums up Pankaj. Zero Waste Eco-Store is at Janakapuri, Asbestos Staff Colony, Karkhana, Secunderabad. First published by **The Hindu** on 16 Sep. 2019