

Advanced Medical Solutions

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Muscat The anti-plastic bags campaign, launched recently by the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), gathered momentum when the volunteers from the non-governmental organisation hit the road to take the awareness drive to other parts of the country.

Sur, a coastal town on the country's eastern region, was the target area for the ESO's environmental campaign to reduce the use of plastic bags in Oman.

The ESO volunteers gave Sur residents a mass of information and giveaways as well as thousands of free, reusable jute shopping bags to kick off its "No to Plastic Bags for Oman" road-show.

"Taking the cause to five towns outside of the Capital over the next five months, ESO, supported by Oman LNG, was a hit with Sur's residents, who have previously been exposed to very little information about the damage plastic bags are having on the environment," says a statement issued here yesterday by the ESO.

Dying unnecessarily

The Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, Saeed Hamood Bin Faisal Al Bu Saidi, has endorsed the campaign. "This campaign aims at encouraging everyone to reduce the consumption of plastic bags given the threats that they pose to human and environmental health," he said in a statement.

"I would like to invite the public and private sectors along with the wider community to join efforts and contribute to making this campaign a success," he added.

"Reduce and reuse is the message we are putting across at these road shows," said Sayyida Tania Bint Shabib Al Saeed of ESO.

"Most people do not realise the impact plastic bags are having on our marine life, birds and land mammals, and the fact that many are dying unnecessarily as a result of our carelessness and frivolity," she pointed out.

The road show, designed using the expertise of some of the Sultanate's most passionate environmentalists, will continue to urge residents to reuse plastic bags and opt for reusable cloth bags. "We have partnered with both Aramex and Towell Auto LLC to make our Tour of Oman a success. Aramex are providing us with a branded van and Towell Auto have made the reusable bags for the Tour," added Sayyida Tania.

According to ESO, plastic bags are contaminating soil and oceans due to their inability to biodegrade, and as a result are entering the food chain when ingested by animals. Every year, approximately one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals die by suffocating or mistaking plastic bags for food.

"We all use plastic bags and we can now play our part by using less and less," said Dr Brian Buckley of Oman LNG LLC, main supporters in this initiative.

"We forget there is a cost, there is the initial cost of the oil used in their manufacturer, and then there is the cost of cleaning up after they have been discarded. It's a total waste of valuable resources."

Part of a six month campaign targeting the public, retail outlets and school children, ESO hopes to not only raise awareness but also drum up public and retail support to push for government regulation of plastic bags in the Sultanate.

{ Gulf News }