

IITGn professor mentors innovative 'green' tea cup

Reusable cups made of recycled water bottles made of modified plastic which is lighter yet stronger than normal plastic cups; product made by his students used by Alaska airlines

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Tweaking the concept of the plastic cups used across the country, a visiting faculty at Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGn) has mentored the invention of a 'green' plastic cup. Made of recycled water bottles, the plastic is stronger than the usual plastic cups but lighter in weight, said Vipin Kumar, visiting professor at faculty of design, IITGn.

"The design was invented by two of my students, Krishna Nadella and Greg Branch, at the University of Washington in my laboratory," said Vipin Kumar, who is associate professor in the mechanical engineering department at the University of Washington and director of UW Microcellular Consortium.

"The cups were made by introducing millions of small bubbles into the plastic to increase its strength and make it lighter too. Nadella and



Vipin Kumar shows the plastic cups

Branch started their own venture 'MicroGreen Polymers' after they graduated and the company is involved in manufacturing these green cups. Since it is a recyclable product,

the duo arranged collection of used water bottles from across the US and is manufacturing cups from these bottles. And the cups too can be recycled," said Kumar.

In fact, the product is being used by Alaska Airlines as part of their in-flight services. The company has set up collection boxes for the used cups, the professor said. "The cups can be printed on which makes them good branding material. The user company merely needs to arrange for a collection mechanism and send it to the company which will reprocess them," he said.

Kumar, however, is surprised by the flimsy quality of plastic cups used at tea stalls in the city. While he said, "I was just not able to hold them. They are a safety hazard," there are no plans to launch the project in India yet. "Our product can revolutionise the way reusable tea cups are seen but we are concentrating on the market in US currently. There are no plans to come to bring the product to India."