

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS MINISTER BATS FOR PRACTICAL & AFFORDABLE SOLUTION

# Plastic Water Bottles will Stay Till Substitute Found: Paswan

**Says research under way into alternatives, flags large number of possible job losses in case of ban**

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**New Delhi:**

The government will not ban use of plastic bottles for water unless there is a practical and affordable alternative available, said food and consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan.

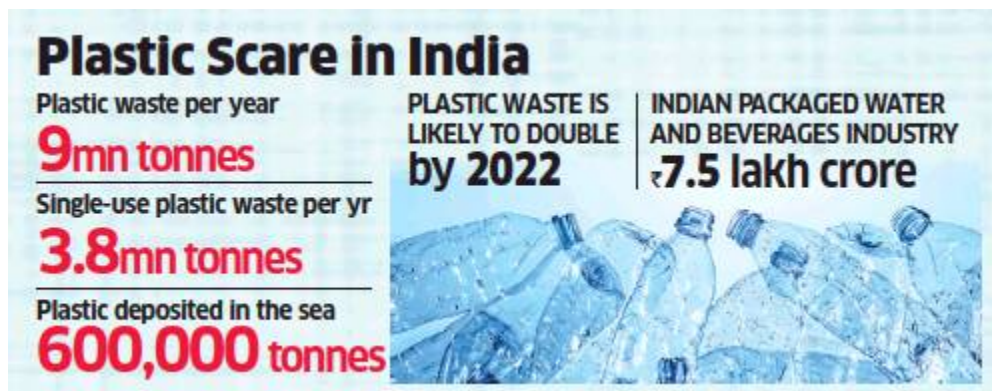
“A large number of jobs are associated with this industry. We can’t disrupt it like this. The ban will come into effect only when we have a proper alternative and something to compensate the loss of jobs,” Paswan told ET.

He said the government was exploring suitable alternatives for packaging of water. “Based on feedback and suggestions from the industry, we have deliberated on a few alternatives that include use of compostable plastics and permitting recycled PET for packaging of water. We may also encourage paper-based packaging layered with ecofriendly compostable plastic,” said the minister.

However, Paswan said compostable plastic made from biodegradable bagasse (sugarcane fibre) or corn is an expensive alternative. “The cost is roughly double (that of) plastic packaging, as production is low. The price may come down if it is used on a large scale,” he said.

Paswan said the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the national standardisation body, has already set standards for compostable plastic.

“However, law doesn’t permit reuse of PET bottles. The FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) and BIS will have to make new rules if use of recycled PET is allowed,” he said.



### ‘Water Bottles of 200-300 ml may be Banned’

Senior officials of the consumer affairs department are of the view that packaged water of more than 1 litre may not be banned at the onset. Water bottles of 200-300 ml may be banned, as has

already been done by the

Maharashtra government.

“Disposable glasses, plates and cutlery, bags and sachets made of plastic, along with straws, are likely to be the first items to be banned,” said an official. The ₹7.5 lakh-crore packaged water and beverages industry is opposed to any such ban, claiming that the plastic used for bottling of water is recyclable.

“There is no damage to the environment as we recycle 92% of these bottles,” said Behram Mehta, secretary of the Natural Mineral Water Association. “The government should not ban it as there is no alternative.”

He said the ban would badly impact the employment scenario, snatching away jobs from 7.5 lakh people, mostly from industries in the micro, small and medium enterprise sector. “At a time when GDP is going down and the country is battling with growing unemployment, (such

a) ban would worsen the situation. The government should not jump the gun,” Mehta said.