

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:362
ANSWERED ON:18.12.2006
EFFECTS OF PLASTIC BAGS
Thakkar Smt. Jayaben B.

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has assessed the adverse environmental effects of plastic bags;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether some States have put a ban on the use of certain types of plastic bags;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the extent of success achieved in this regard so far;
- (e) the concrete steps proposed to be taken to ban the plastic bags all over the country; and
- (f) the alternatives that have been proposed/suggested for use in place of plastic bags?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (f) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (a) TO (f) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 362 TO BE ANSWERED ON MONDAY, THE 18TH DECEMBER 2006 REGARDING "EFFECTS OF PLASTIC BAGS" BY SHRIMATI JAYABEN B. THAKKAR, M.P.

(a) & (b) Plastic bags are made of polyethylene (long chain hydrocarbon). Plastics are generally chemically inert and so used for the manufacture of a large number of consumer items including bags, personal care products, in packaging food stuff, medicine, and child care products etc. A monograph entitled "Plastics for Environment and Sustainable Development" was published in 2003 by the Indian Centre for Plastics in the Environment, Mumbai and the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology, Chennai, an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, which comprehensively assesses issues concerning Sustainability of plastics as materials and their impact on the environment. However the indiscriminate littering of plastics and environmentally unsound recycling practices have the potential to cause adverse impacts on environment and health.

(c) & (d). The Government of India has notified the Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999 amended 2003 under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986. As per these rules, manufacture, stocking, distribution, or selling of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic which are less than 20 x 30 cms in size and 20 microns thickness is banned. These rules also prohibit use of recycled plastic bags for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging of foodstuffs. Further units manufacturing carry bags or containers made of virgin and recycled plastics are required to register with the concerned State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or Pollution Control Committee (PCC).

As per information made available by State Pollution Control Boards, the States like Maharashtra, Punjab, Chandigarh, Kerala, Meghalaya and Goa have laid down stricter norms than prescribed with regard to thickness of plastic bags i.e. 50, 30, 30, 30, 40 and 40 microns respectively. The State of Himachal Pradesh has banned carry bags made of non biodegradable material of thickness less than 70 microns and size less than 30 x 45 cms. Further the States of Gujarat, Orissa and Goa have banned use of plastic bags in certain religious and tourist places like Ambaji, Dakor, Somnath in Gujarat, municipal area of Puri and Konark in Orissa and some important tourist spots in Goa. The concerned State Governments and the Union Territory Administrations are monitoring the implementation.

(e) & (f) There is no proposal with the Government of India, at present to ban usage of plastic bags all over the country, considering the volume of plastics consumed, size of the plastic industry and non availability of cheaper substitutes. Cloths, jute and bags made of paper wherever applicable, are considered as alternatives in place of plastic bags. With a view to identify successful approaches followed by some of the States for the managements of plastics, the Central Government is closely watching the emerging situation.