

## Paswan chairs meeting with stakeholders for SUP alternatives

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**Paswan asked manufacturers of packaged drinking water to come up with alternative packaging solutions in the next three days**



Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Ram Vilas Paswan met key stakeholders from Plastic bottle industry and senior government officials from various ministries to find suitable alternative for single use plastic.

During the meeting various alternatives to plastics were discussed including Glass, Metal, Paper and Natural Polymers. The Senior Economic adviser from the Ministry at the onset explained the various dangers associated with plastics. He said that micro-plastics contaminate the soil and water resources, influence animal tissues and also become active breeding ground for mosquitos etc. Therefore, the need of the hour he said, is to find suitable alternatives to plastic.

Paswan asserted that plastic plays a major role in damaging environment and has adverse impact on the health of human beings as well as animals. Paswan stated that kilos of plastic material is extracted from cows' stomach, collected from beaches in Mumbai and also chokes our rivers such as Yamuna. He further said that recycling is not a permanent solution and a permanent solution is that plastic should be banned and replaced. Paswan also said there is a need to find an alternative, which is equally affordable and reliable. He said even paper bottle is not an alternative as some plastic is mixed in that too.

Paswan asked manufacturers of packaged drinking water to come up with alternative packaging solutions in the next three days and also asked all manufacturers to send their suggestions by September 11. He informed that an inter-ministerial committee, under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary, has been formed to look into the issue of banning single use plastic either all at once or in a phased manner. The suggestions as received would be sent to the inter-ministerial panel and the

Prime Ministers' Office (PMO) after which the final decision would be taken by the government.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Paswan said that the ban would not affect employment as the 'alternative to plastic' would create jobs. Railway ministry which manufactures and sell packaged drinking water under 'Rail Neer' brand is also looking for alternatives including inserting polymers to make the bottle biodegradable.

During the meeting, the status on various plastic materials presently allowed for packing of drinking water including restrictions, both at national and international levels were discussed. All the participants agreed that there is a need for innovation in recycling and finding new alternatives to develop packing materials which were safe for use and in fighting the menace of environmental pollution. The meeting was attended by several stakeholders including Secretary, Consumer Affairs Avinash K Srivastava, DG, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), FSSAI, CIPET, CSIR along with officials from the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Jal Shakti, Petroleum, Railways and big private manufacturers such as Bisleri, Kinley and Pepsi Co.