

# 'Total ban on plastic bags bad idea'

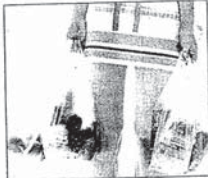
## Pushing Paper Bags Will Only Lead To More Cutting Of Trees, Says Minister

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government made it clear that it is not in favour of a blanket ban on using plastic bags while it is working on use of biodegradable plastic as colouring elements like dyes are a health hazard and thin bags and material can severely jam up sewage systems.

Minister of state for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh told Lok Sabha on Wednesday that while reducing plastics was necessary, the material had been promoted initially to save paper and trees. He sought to argue that if municipalities made a better effort to manage their solid waste, the plastic problem would reduce considerably.

The government, he said, was working on use of biodegradable plastic as reverting to paper bags could be even more hazardous to the environment. People had switched to use of plastic rather than paper the world over some 20 years



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Jairam Ramesh | MINISTER

Ramesh said, assuring the House that the government would have a stringent monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that the right kind of re-cyclable plastic is used.

In his response, Ramesh clarified that it was in the wake of the failure of civic bodies to collect and dispose waste that

various states like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Delhi had resorted to banning use of plastic bags. The government, he said, had notified Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999 (amended in 2003) to regulate the use and manufacture of plastic carry bags, containers and recycling of plastic wastes.

"We are moving towards thicker and bio-degradable bags. Bio-degradable is at a nascent stage... some establishments have started using it," the minister said. On the recycling of plastic, he said it would be undertaken in accordance with specifications of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). He also advocated use of jute bags as another alternative to paper bags, as jute was an eco-friendly material. The minister said the government had undertaken a project for conservation of Dal Lake in Srinagar which is expected to be completed in the next three years.

"Plastic itself is a chemically inert substance, used worldwide for packaging and is not per-se hazardous to health and environment. Recycling of plastic, if carried out as per approved procedures and guidelines, may not be an environmental or health hazard," Ramesh said, assuring the House that the government would have a stringent monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that the right kind of re-cycleable plastic is used.

– Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Environment and Forests, GOI

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