



Centre Rules out Total Ban on Firecrackers

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The Government of India has ruled out a national ban on firecrackers. This was in response to pleas being heard by the Supreme Court on a complete nationwide ban on the use, manufacture, licensing, sale, resale or distribution of firecrackers and sparklers of any kind in a bid to combat pollution on an emergency basis.

The government has suggested alternative measures to curb pollution during Diwali that include the production of “green crackers”; community cracker bursting in major cities and a freeze on the production of series crackers or laris.

NOTE:

- In July 2017, the Supreme Court prohibited the use of five chemicals, labelled as toxic by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), in the manufacture of firecrackers. they include antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead.
- In October 2017, the Supreme Court suspended the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and NCR till November 1, 2017, in a bid to test whether a Diwali without firecrackers this year will have a “positive effect” on the health of citizens and a steadily deteriorating air quality.

The Union Ministry of Environment submitted a five-page affidavit to the Supreme Court suggesting ways to deal with the pollution problem and chalking out short-term measures to combat pollution during Diwali.

Proposals Include

- Working together with institutions like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, National Environment Engineering Research Institute, Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to deal with Diwali pollution.
- PESO could be approached to ensure that fireworks with permitted chemicals and decibel levels are used. PESO could run tests for banned ones like lithium, arsenic, antimony, lead, mercury.

- CPCB and respective state pollution control boards shall carry out short-term monitoring in their cities for 14 days.
- Setting up of Raw Material Characterisation Facilities to check the presence of high contents of unburned material, partially combusted material or poor quality of raw material in gunpowder in firecrackers.
- Use of reduced emission firecrackers or improved firecrackers - these are low emission sound and light emitting functional crackers with PM reduction by 30-35% and a significant reduction in nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide due to in-situ water generation as a dust suppressant and low cost due to the usage of low-cost oxidants.