

# IMPORT OF PLASTIC BOTTLES FOR WASTE PROCESSING ALLOWED

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

After banning the import of plastic waste in 2019, the Environment Ministry has permitted containers made of polyethylene terephthalate, as plastic waste, to be imported for processing.

The decision to roll back the ban was taken last year after representations by several industries in the business of processing waste said there was too little waste available for them in India and this was causing them financial losses.

An expert committee of the Environment Ministry, last December, recommended that firms which had applied for permission could import polyethylene terephthalate flakes and bottles up to 50% of their production capacity. Polyethylene terephthalate is a category of plastic, and nearly 90% of the domestic supply of containers using them is already recycled.

However, this reprieve has not gone down well with environmentalist groups.

## Consultative meeting

On Wednesday however, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, a Union Commerce Ministry held a consultative meeting of representatives from the Union Environment Ministry and environmentalist organisation Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch (PDUSM), companies that had requested permission to import plastic waste and the Plastic Export Promotional Council.

In 2021, seven Indian companies have applied to import 93,000 tonnes of plastic bottles waste from countries such as America, Canada, Germany, citing a shortage of plastic waste in India. A campaign by the PDUSM against the import of plastic waste had played a role in the Centre's decision to impose a ban in 2019.

"There is no shortage of polyethylene terephthalate waste in India. As per the industry data, more than 14 lakh tonnes of such plastic are consumed annually in India, and even with a global highest 80% recycling rate, approx. 2.8 lakh tonnes of plastic bottles waste never gets collected. While the whole world is banning such imports to strengthen local plastic waste management, India would have been the first country to re-allow the import of plastic waste," Vinod Shukla, President, PDUSM, told *The Hindu*,

"Our main aim is to increase the collection of local waste. Our country's waste must be recycled first, before importing waste from other countries to make textiles/recycled products," Mr. Shukla said.

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