

# Govt brings masks and hand sanitizers under the Essential Commodities Act

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In view of the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 (Corona Virus) and concern of the logistics for COVID-19 management particularly during the last couple of weeks and that masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical masks, N95 masks) and hand sanitizers have been noted to be either not available with most of the vendors in the market or are available with great difficulty at exorbitant prices, Government has notified an Order under the Essential Commodities Act to declare these items as Essential Commodities up to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 by amending the Schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. It has also issued an advisory under the Legal Metrology Act. Under the E.C Act, after discussions with the manufacturers, States can ask them to enhance their production capacity of these items, to make the supply chain smooth, while under the L.M. Act the States can ensure sale of both the items at MRP.

On these two items, the States may now notify the Central order in their official Gazette, also issue their own orders under the EC Act to that effect and take necessary actions as per the situation prevailing in the respective States. Under the EC Act, powers of the Central Government have already been delegated to the States by way of orders during 1972 to 1978. The States/UTs, therefore, may take action against the offenders under the EC Act and PBMMSEC Act. An offender under the EC Act may be punished with an imprisonment up to 7 years or fine or both and under the PBMMSEC Act, he can be detained for a maximum of 6 months.

The decision would empower the Government and States/UTs to regulate production, quality, distribution etc. of masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical masks, N95 masks) and hand sanitizers and to smoothen the sale and availability of these items and carry out operations against orders speculators etc. and those involved in over pricing, blackmarketing etc. It will enhance the availability of both the items to the general people at reasonable prices or under MRP. The States are also advised to give publicity of State Helplines for registering complaints by the consumers of the above two items. The consumers may also register their complaints in this matter with the National Consumer Helpline No. 1800-11-4000, Online Complaints: [www.consumerhelpline.gov.in](http://www.consumerhelpline.gov.in), Department's Website [www.consumeraffairs.nic.in](http://www.consumeraffairs.nic.in), [dsadmin-ca@nic.in](mailto:dsadmin-ca@nic.in) and [dirwm-ca@nic.in](mailto:dirwm-ca@nic.in).

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