

## Delay ban on single-use plastic- MSMEs to govt

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A group of more than 260 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) has asked the Union government to delay the ban on single-use plastic by a year saying they need more time to switch to alternatives such as biodegradable paper. The ban on the manufacture and use of single-use plastic is due to come into effect on 1 July.

The forum warned that the ban could result in the closure of swab manufacturing in India, threatening around 3,000 MSMEs and 15,000 jobs. The ban will force MSMEs to import rolled paper sticks at high costs, which will jeopardize MSMEs in the healthcare sector, the forum said.

MSMEs need at least 3-4 months to clear products from the distribution and retail channels, it said.

“The paper required for the manufacturing of the rolled paper sticks is unavailable in India and has to be imported from Germany and other developed nations as none of the paper making companies from India are equipped or able to manufacture the paper quality required for making paper rolled sticks for swabs,” the MSMEs said in a letter to the ministry of MSME, commerce and environment.

The ban has been implemented “without a survey of the ground situation”, the MSMEs said. On a similar ban, the EU gave 3.5 years to its cotton buds industry before the ban, while India barely gave 1.5 years, the forum said.

Indian companies have not been able to develop the right paper for solid rolled, small diameter sticks for cotton ear buds but the industry is inching close to a solution, the MSME forum contended. “At present, paper is being imported by a few MSMEs from Finland and Sweden, to make sticks. However, imported paper is very highly priced,” they said.