

Maharashtra may witness severe surgical mask shortage crisis

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Maharashtra capping prices of face masks



To avoid the crisis of masks shortage post Maharashtra government's notification on capping prices of face masks & to stop sub-standard & inferior quality masks flooding the market, ensuring high quality safe products reach the last mile rural interiors, Rajiv Nath, Forum Coordinator, Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMeD) in a meeting with the government requested for rational pricing & amendment of the notification 'NO 2020/SI.No. 306/Aarogaya 5' capping prices of face masks.

"We are glad Maharashtra Govt. took the initiative to protect consumers by bringing in price caps after removal of price caps by the Central Govt. on surgical mask. The Maharashtra government's intentions are good, as they seek to protect consumers and give them access to reasonably priced masks of standard and high quality. However, the mask prices that have been fixed need to be rational or good quality manufacturers will focus on sales in states other than Maharashtra" stated Rajiv Nath.

"The intention of regulations needs to be to discipline errant manufacturers & traders not to go overboard in creating a scenario whereby supply chains get disrupted creating shortages of standard quality goods leaving underfed markets to be exploited with sub standard low priced goods, resulting in more regulations. Now retailers will stop stocking Surgical & N95 Masks which provide higher protection against transmission of COVID-19 and instead push sales of reusable cotton mask which will have higher trade margin for them but provide less protection to public", explained Nath.

"Simple solution for masks is to keep price caps rational at 2-3 times of ex factory price - as for critical medical device to end profiteering not profits and for other medical devices to keep MRP at 2-4 times of ex factory / import landed price to end prevailing MRP of over 10-20 times of imports landed / ex factory price" suggested Nath.

Manufacturers/ distributors / resellers may be asked to carry MRP data on invoice – both as - transaction value & MRP, so that trade margin details can be transparently evident enabling consumer protection.

AiMED is also writing to NPPA to consider its long standing request to cap MRP of all types of masks so that individual states

need not seek price capping as if this is done by oversight at irrational levels it may deny access to standard quality product and defeats its very purpose.

“The Indian Medical Device manufacturers are more than hopeful that Maharashtra Govt. will look into the mask issue & take corrective action to provide rational pricing and help them manufacture high quality safe products which reach the last mile rural interiors” concluded Nath.