

POLLUTION MASKS NCR

Ranjit Kumar



As the air quality in the capital continues to be alarming, the sale of masks has gone up. Designers masks are available in different colours and prints, and it is no longer just joggers or foreigners who are buying them – it's on Noida's checklist, too

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Discussions on the rising pollution and worsening air quality of NCR are nothing new, but what's new is that people are now taking steps to keep themselves away from the toxic air. We recently told you that the sale of air purifiers in the capital has seen a huge jump, but controlling air quality indoors is no longer enough. Noidawal-lahs are feeling the need to do something about the poisonous air they breath when out on the roads.

Masks are easiest and most affordable solution to the air pollution for most with different varieties being sold in the markets. Apart from the common white and green surgical masks that were earlier advised for those suffering from respiratory diseases, there is a wide range of designer masks avail-

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— Rishabh, Noida student

able at markets like Noida's Sector 18, Khan Market, Yusuf Sarai and Saket for the fashion conscious. Not just markets, masks have become must-haves for foreigners and people from other cities landing in the capital and are also available at the IGI Airport.

Donning these masks becoming quite the fashion trend among youngsters and sellers say that while earlier it was mostly foreigners who bought these masks, now many youngsters walk in looking for 'anti-pollution masks' and they don't want the white and green surgical ones, but designer ones that come in various colours and prints.

'CAN'T CYCLE WITHOUT WEARING A MASK'

Rishabh Ahuja, a college student in Noida, says, "I ride my

bike along the expressway to reach college everyday and without this mask, it feels like I'm inhaling smoke throughout the ride. With the level of pollution currently, it is impossible to breathe without the mask."

Ankush Bhatnagar, an avid cyclist, says, "Activities like cycling in the early morning have turned from being healthy to hazardous because of the pollution. Some say that at ₹2,000, these masks are expensive. But I don't agree. It is a small sum if it takes care of your health. I am buying this mask and have urged my friends in the biking group to get one each as well."

'WE WERE OUT OF STOCK WITHIN A WEEK'

Rakesh Singh, who supplies these masks to retailers in Noida, says, "Initially these masks were popular with bike riders and to some extent, cyclists but now everyone seems to have caught a fancy for them. I used to deliver 100 masks a month to the retailers till recently. But of late, the stocks that would last a month finished in about a week. These masks don't look like surgical masks or the usual swine flu masks; they are more stylish which is why the youngsters are buying them more. It's become a fad now."

At Khan Market, the only place where designer masks are available is a medical store that sells out its stock of over 40-50 masks in two-three days and the demand is increasing. "There are many foreigners visiting the market, and they walk in asking for masks with single or double filter. Some don't even enquire about different varieties or if there is something available in a lower price range, they readily take whatever is available. We run out of stock in three-four days," says Vikas Yadav who works at a medical store in Khan Market. While earlier the demand for these masks was higher among riders and runners, now they have become a part of Delhi's lifestyle, says Gaurav Wadhwa, who has been selling these masks as part of biking gear.

DELHI RUNS THE MASKED MARATHON



CHRISTMAS MASK SHOPPING!

Sankh Sen



The Indo-German Chamber of Commerce recently held a Christmas market where several kiosks were dedicated solely to different varieties of masks

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— Rakesh Singh, who supplies masks to Noida retailers

CAN'T BE ON THE ROADS WITHOUT MASKS: NOIDA TRAFFIC COPS

We have to be on the roads all day. Others can at least go and sit in their offices for some time. So, it is worse for us. We don't buy the more expensive masks of course, but these masks are necessary. Without this, the chances of falling ill due to fumes and smoke are dangerously high!

— Suresh, a traffic constable near Sector 15

