



Toxics Link Welcomes CDSCO's Nationwide Action Against Toxic Skin-Lightening Products

Regulatory action comes after prolonged advocacy for stronger controls on mercury-containing skin-lightening cosmetics

New Delhi, September 18, 2026: Toxics Link has welcomed the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation's (CDSCO) nationwide public health alert against unauthorised skin-lightening cosmetics containing excessive levels of heavy metals, describing the action as an important step towards protecting consumers from toxic and potentially hazardous cosmetic products.

Mercury is a potent neurotoxic substance, and exposure can affect the nervous system and kidneys. Repeated use of mercury-containing creams can result in absorption of mercury through the skin, while environmental contamination can occur when such products enter wastewater and waste streams. Pregnant women, infants and young children may be particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of mercury exposure. India is a Party to the **Minamata Convention on Mercury**, and reducing exposure to mercury is central to protecting both human health and the environment.

In July 2026, Toxics Link through a Press Release had welcomed the Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration's action against nine skin-lightening cosmetic products found to contain excessive levels of mercury and, in one case, lead, and urged the national regulatory authorities to extend such action across the country, noting that toxic products could continue to reach consumers through retail outlets, informal markets and online platforms.

We are pleased to now see CDSCO's decisive action through nationwide public health warnings and a formal ban. However, there are more toxic skin-lightening and skin-brightening products still openly available and sold in India that need to be brought under this nationwide ban.

We urge the Regulator to restrict the sale, use, distribution and import of all skin-lightening and skin-brightening products containing mercury above the permissible limit of 1 ppm. Such products can pose serious risks to the health of consumers and must be removed from the market to protect public health. Earlier reports from Nagpur hospitals revealed several cases of illness among women using skin lightening fairness products over the past years.



“We welcome CDSCO’s timely action against unauthorised skin-lightening products containing excessive levels of heavy metals. Toxics Link has been consistently raising concerns about the presence of mercury and other toxic substances in skin-lightening cosmetics and the serious risks they pose to consumers. The latest action demonstrates the importance of strong regulatory surveillance and coordinated enforcement across the country. We hope that the regulatory measures taken will ensure that these products are no longer available in the market.,” said Satish Sinha, Associate Director, Toxics Link.

Toxics Link calls for:

- Continued nationwide surveillance and testing of skin-lightening and other cosmetic products for mercury and other hazardous substances.
- Strong monitoring of online marketplaces as well as retail and informal markets.
- Swift recall and removal of non-compliant products from the market.
- Effective enforcement against manufacturers, importers, distributors and sellers of unauthorised or unsafe cosmetics.
- Stronger customs and import controls to prevent non-compliant cosmetic products from entering India.
- Greater public awareness so consumers can identify and avoid unauthorised skin-lightening products.

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About Toxics Link

Toxics Link is an Indian environmental research and advocacy organisation set up in 1996, engaged in disseminating information to help strengthen the campaign against toxics pollution, provide cleaner alternatives, and bring together groups and people affected by this problem. Toxics Link’s Mission Statement - “Working together for environmental justice and freedom from toxins.”

More at: www.toxicslink.org

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