

## Diwali spark fails to light up markets as shoppers strive to break even

ZARIN GHOSHANI  
New Delhi, 4 November

For the past three days, Raunak Gupta, who owns an electronics store in Lalpur South Delhi, has been wondering if he would be able to at least break even on the investments he made on bulk buying electronic items and lighting to sell during Diwali.

While the market is busy as ever, no one seems to be buying much. "I spent over ₹2.5 million in buying goods to sell this Diwali. I was hoping to earn almost double in sales. But at the rate I am going I would be lucky if I do not incur losses," he said.

In Gujarat's Surat, Anand Bhat Shah, a retail merchant, is still awaiting cheques from five of his customers amounting to more than ₹5 million.

"They claim they have not been able to sell the stocks and are asking for more time for payments. I can still wait till the end of Diwali but smaller traders are

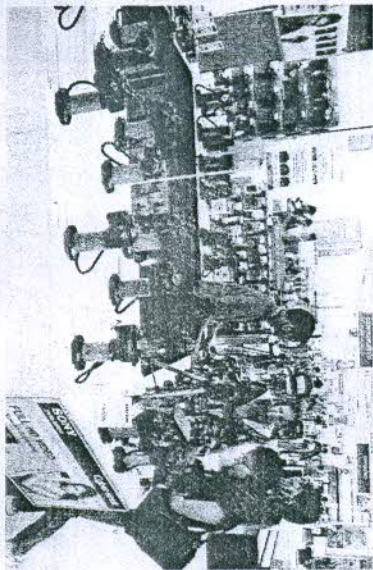
finding it tough. The overall market sentiments after demonetisation has not been able to change ever since. For the past three years, it has been fluctuating and it has not been able to reach the high it would do pre-note ban," he said.

**Pinning hopes on Dhanteras, traders believe that if there is any scope for a last-minute turnaround it would happen on Monday**

Markets across the country have seen a decline in footfalls, other than essentials required during Diwali, people seem to be avoiding markets, be it high street shopping complexes, malls or local bazars.

From firecracker-sale ban, negative consumer sentiments, less liquidity in the market to the online site festival blitzkrieg right before the offline festive sales, traders are blaming all these for the dip in bricks and mortar shopping across the country.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday declared that there was no shopping fever in the markets this year around and situation seems to be worse from last year.



Shop owners claim that footfalls in markets this time around would not be any parameter for gauging sales, as people are stepping out but not many are buying.

Pinning hopes on Dhanteras, traders believe that if there is any scope for a last-minute turnaround it would happen on Monday.

Spending capacity of customers, they claim, has gone down drastically. "The traders are hoping that from tomorrow, the day of Dhanteras festival shopping will take a speed and in remaining days of festival, the consumers will come to the markets. In comparison to last year there is a 40 per cent decline in business," said Praveen Khandewal, secretary general, CAIT.

Many claim footfalls in markets this time around would not be any parameter for gauging sales, as while people are stepping out, not many are buying. "Whatever bare minimum is needed for rituals during Diwali are the only items being bought. No one is buying clothes, electronics, or other non-essential items that are otherwise a hit during Diwali," said Ashok Bandhwa, president, Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Association.

### Online sale madness

While country's two online marketplace giants — Amazon India and Flipkart — did not give any actual sale numbers, the way the described, while ridiculous, gives an idea on how much they sold certain items.

Picture this. Amazon claimed that after its first wave of sale, it sold more Lego bricks than the height of Dubai's Burj Khalifa and more Diwali lights than what would be required to light up

Mount Everest. Flipkart, too, claimed that if all the washing machines it sold were stacked together, its height would be 35 times more than that of Everest.

With most of the shopping at least in the top 150 cities already done at near-heard discounts, traders claim no one now wants to step into the shops to buy more. "They are having their sales in waves, which is ruining any appetite for shopping left in customers. Online companies are selling products at predatory prices, which are affecting offline business," said Khandewal.

### Hopes on last-minute shopping spree

Some are still hoping for a turnaround. Industry body ASSOCHAM said sentiments would pick up in the next three days on the back of last-minute shoppers. "They would be growth of linked industries such as electronics, household gift items, FMCG. Moreover, this year Diwali is falling in the first week of the month so people will have more disposable income after getting annual bonus and salary payments," the spokesperson said.

## CAPEX ON SECURITY MAY HIT \$2.73B

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 4

The capital expenditure by central and state government agencies on homeland security presents potential of \$2.73 billion for the year 2018-2019, according to a Assocham-KPMG study on Sunday.

"Much of this potential is created due to police modernisation, critical infrastructure protection and counter terrorism efforts of the government," said the study. Some opportunities are also present in the private sector and export markets, it said.

In 2018, the budgetary allocation to ministry of home affairs was around \$15.8 billion, a growth of 10 per cent over the previous year, it said.

"Around eight per cent (\$1.3 billion) of the total budget has been allocated towards modernisation of homeland security forces and upgradation of current infrastructure," it said.

The study also highlighted that while total budget earmarked by state governments for modernisation of state police forces, and upgradation of state police infrastructure is \$132 million, an additional provision for security related expenditure of \$332 million has been made for left wing extremism affected areas.

Further, the study stated that increased spending on infra development and modernisation is the need of the hour as police forces are facing multiple challenges.

"With increased allocation of funds to homeland security, there is a pressing need for overhauling its physical, procedural and technological architecture, to address new and emerging threats," it said.

# Govt expenditure presents \$3 bn potential for homeland security: study

Agencies, New Delhi

Capital expenditure by Central and state government agencies on homeland security presents potential of 2.73 billion dollars for 2018-2019, a study said.

"Much of this potential is created due to police modernisation, critical infrastructure protection and counter terrorism efforts of the government," said the study titled 'Modernisation of Homeland Security: Staying Safe in a Smart World', jointly conducted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and professional services firm KPMG.

Some opportunities are also present in the private sector and export markets, the report added.

In 2018, the budgetary allocation to Home Ministry was around 15.8 billion dollars, a growth of 10 per cent over the previous year. Around eight per cent (1.3 billion dollars) of the total budget has been allocated towards modernisation of home-



land security forces and upgrade of current infrastructure.

The study also highlighted that while total budget earmarked by state governments for modernisation of state police forces and upgrade of state police infrastructure is 132 million dollars, an additional provision for security related expenditure of 332 million dollars has been made for left wing extremism-affected areas.

The ASSOCHAM study added that increased government

spending on infrastructure development and modernisation is the need of the hour as state and central police forces are facing multiple challenges.

"With increased allocation of funds to homeland security, there is a pressing need for overhauling its physical, procedural and technological architecture, to address new and emerging threats."

Some of issues in India's homeland security sector are - emerging security threats due to

use of smart technologies, greater exposure to terrorism threat, inconsistent information collection and sharing, and poorly equipped and trained state security forces.

The study thus suggested leveraging technological advancements to mitigate rising security challenges and ensure greater public safety using recent trends in technological innovation for homeland security - policing using social media analytics, biometric passenger screening at airport, use of unmanned surveillance aircraft, computerised behavioural pattern recognition and advanced detection devices.

It also recommended greater private sector participation for enhancing public safety. "Innovative private technology sector can deliver optimal results by securing nation's interests, and creating India's first internal security market, which will address long-term issue of imports of security equipment."