

Survey finds 50% industrial clusters 'critically polluted'

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has identified 43 out of 88 major industrial clusters in the country as "critically polluted."

Speaking on the sidelines of a seminar organised by Indian Chamber of Commerce here on Tuesday, the CPCB Chairman, Mr. S.P. Gautam, said that the board had come out with a comprehensive environment pollution index (CEPI) in collaboration with IIT Delhi and surveyed the pollution levels of 88 industrial clusters across the country.

"Out of the 88 clusters, 43 were found to be critically polluting," he said, adding that the polluted areas or industrial clusters were given a moratorium till August so that CPCB in consultation with the respective State Pollution Control Boards and the industrial bodies can draw a time-bound action plan for reducing the pollution level in these areas. The central board would not grant any environment clearance to project proposals in these areas till August, 2010, Mr Gautam said.

THE POLLUTERS

The polluted clusters include the industrial areas of Haldia (CEPI of 75.43), Howrah (74.84) and Asansol (70.20) in West Bengal. Ankleshwar and Vapi in Gujarat topped the list of most pollution clusters with scores of 88.50 and 88.09. "A CEPI score of more than 70 should be considered as critically polluted," the CPCB chairman said.

FUTURE PLANS

According to him, the CPCB is planning to make life cycle analysis (LCA) mandatory for all future industrial project proposals to secure environmental clearance. "The new rules will be in force within next six months," he said. The board is also coming out with geospatial-based (GPS) environment monitoring system soon. "In another four to five months, we'll have geospatial-based information system in place to map the pollution load of different industries and different areas. This may prick some polluting industries," he added.

CPCB has already identified 17 industrial sectors, including thermal power, as major polluting industries. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry has also revised the National Ambient Air Quality Standards through a gazette notification in November last year.

"The thermal power sector has been found to be a major defaulter under the amended emission norms," Gautam said, adding that renewable energy sources have to be given more importance than coal or gas.

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