

Govt plans new law to punish green norms violator

Proposes heavy fine up to Rs 10 crore for violation

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NEW DELHI: The Union Environment Ministry plans to come out with a new law to substantially enhance the penalties for environmental crimes.

The move was made because most of the violations of green laws happen due to absence of deterring penalty clauses in the law.

"The Union Ministry of Environment and Forest will bring out a new law on the civil

penalties that will seek to impose heavy fine on the violators. The fine could be Rs 10,000 to Rs 10 crore depending upon the nature of the violation," Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar told *DH* in an interview.

Realising the proposed legislation and improved compliance to eco-norms are among the major tasks ahead for the ministry over the next 2-3 years.

"Besides coming out with the new law, if changes are

needed in the existing legislation, we will make those changes also," Javadekar said on the eve of the NDA government completing 2 years in office.

An expert panel, headed by the former Cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian had earlier suggested overhauling the penalty clauses in the environment and wildlife laws as they are too weak to deter anyone.

The Subramanian panel reviewed 6 laws. They are Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980; Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; The Air (Prevention

Laws reviewed

- Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and The Indian Forests Act, 1927.

"The punishment required

under the acts does not always act as a deterrent to violators. The chargesheets filed (in such cases) rarely come to successful fruition because of lack of manpower and adequate capacity to pursue them effectively," the panel recommended.

Putting in place a more stringent compliance norms with rigorous punishment options will be one of the priorities of the Green Ministry, Javadekar said. Asked about cleaning up the Ganga, the minister said a series of pollution control measures undertaken in the last 2 years resulted in 35% reduction in pollution of the mighty river. "We have recently submitted a report to the

Prime Minister's Office," he added.

The ministry identified 3400 polluting industries and asked them to improve their machines and install pollution measurement instruments to check the outflow and emissions. Almost 2400 units have installed these machines and the rest have promised to do so.

Almost 700 of these polluting units were on the banks of Ganga. "No black liquor or spent wash is flowing into Ganga now. The government is also going to install more common effluent treatment plants," Javadekar said.

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