

New effluent norms for rubber industry soon

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THE Union ministry of environment and forests, for the first time has chalked out comprehensive effluent standard norms for the rubber industry across all product categories.

According to official sources this measure will check the pollution problem arising from rubber parks coming up in the country. While one was situated only in Kerala since the last seven-eight years, some are coming up in Tripura.

Effluent standard is a type of limit imposed by the environment ministry or any other government agency on quantities, rates and concentrations of materials/pollutants in waste water discharges. While the order has been passed upon the intervention of the court, another salient feature of this order is that this rule sets a precedent for other industries as well.

Earlier central government used to make broad guidelines for the pollution norms and the respective state pollution boards used to frame laws. Now, with the interim order of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana, if the state laws are found deficient or lacking strength to combat the pollution issues in a respective industry, the central government could frame the respective pollution norms, air and water, and states

have to abide by these and state pollution control boards will have to monitor it.

Second, while the earlier emission norms were only applicable for natural rubber - processing and product industry, these new guidelines have covered all categories of rubber industry - tyre, tube and synthetic rubber industry.

According to official sources, the court has observed that many states have either stopped framing pollution control norms or have been toning down the guidelines issued by the central government. According to the Act, they are not allowed to relax the pollution control norms; rather they can only tighten the norms depending on the seriousness of the issue over and above the norms issued by central government.

These norms are however not applicable to small scale industry (SSI). SSI is defined as one where investment in plant

and machinery, where held on ownership terms or on lease or by hire purchase, does not exceed ₹1 crore.

According to officials in the rubber board, while these norms are not detrimental for the industry, they have definitely standardised the effluent norms for the entire sector.

Some time before, the ministry had come down heavily on the organic chemical manufacturing industry, which had to undergo a complete makeover to comply with the new standards on effluent treatment and emission standards for hazardous wastes.

Industry experts said earlier, from time to time, the ministry used to amend the Environment Protection Act for individual chemicals. Now it has been bringing out comprehensive guidelines. Prior to rubber, it was a host of chemicals like dyes, dyestuff and organic chemicals.