ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Central Environmental Authority
Maligawatta New Town, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka. Tel: 449455/449456, 439073-76
Fax No: (01) 446749

Ministry of Environment & Parliamentary Affairs

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LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ERRANT INDUSTRIALISTS

The CEA has instituted legal action against several industrialists who were found violating terms and conditions of environmental licensing procedure gazetted under the National Environmental Act, in the wake of the Authority being vested with regulatory powers.

Among the cases filed so far were five, pertaining to noise and air pollution, two against industries that continue to operate without an Environment Protection Licence (EPL) and two for discharge of effluent that does not conform to prescribed standards.

The decision to prosecute offenders came as a result of a two year period of monitoring of the Environmental Licensing Procedure since its inception in July 1990. The Environmental Licensing Procedure is the first regulatory programme implemented by the CEA.

It is by far, easier to implement the Licensing programme with the new industries, ie. those which came into operation after the 1st of July 1990. In the case of new industries, the requirement to obtain site clearance before construction, guarantees the environmental suitability of locating such industries. This clearance is a valuable asset to the industrialist. Existing industries on the other hand, demand a high level of attention and expertise in solving and mitigating the problems caused by inappropriate siting, untreated waste discharges /emissions due to financial constraints, lack of suitable technology and proper awareness.

During the last two years a cross section of industrialists applied and obtained the Environmental Protection licences. Some others were granted extended time to conform to the required standards. Several others were subjected to relocation. As a result of CEA's constant arbitration some major industrial establishments responded favourably by installing efficient treatment systems. Among those industrialists who have applied for the EPL are a number of saw mills. They require the EPL to obtain a permit from the Forest

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MINISTER VISITS SAMANALA WEWA SITE

An engineer explains a point to Environment Minister Dr Wimal Wickramasinghe during the visit

The new water leak in the right bank of the Samanalawewa Hydro Electric Project would cause no damage to the stability of the dam or to its foundation Minister of Environment Hon Dr Wimal Wickramasinghe was assured during a visit to the site recently.

The Minister was accompanied by officials of the Ministry of

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Pollution from vehicle exhausts to be controlled

During the past decade or so, during which many environmental programmes were initiated in Sri Lanka, the focus has been mainly on water pollution and its control. Pollution control strategies and measures have been taken mainly in this particular field due to the relative severity of water pollution. It is envisaged however, that air pollution problems will become a major cause for concern within the next decade or so, with the increase in both industrial activities and vehicular traffic.

The major sources of air pollution in Sri Lanka are, emissions from mobile sources ie. vehicle exhaust emissions, and from stationary sources such as major industrial installations..

Of these, the major source of air pollution particularly in urban centres such as Colombo is emissions from vehicle exhausts.

With the liberalization of import controls in Sri Lanka there has been a vast increase in the number of vehicles. It is estimated that the present stock is in the region of 900,000 vehicles, the majority of which are in the Colombo District.

Monitoring of Air pollutants by Environmental Officers of CEA

The major pollutants emitted by vehicles are carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and lead. All of the above mentioned pollutants have adverse health effects the respiratory and nervous system being the most susceptible. Excessive lead levels are particularly dangerous, as high levels of lead in the air may cause irreversible brain damage specially in children under five years.

In 1987, a committee was appointed by the then Prime Minister Hon. R Premadasa, in order to examine the problems caused by vehicle exhaust emissions. The work of the committee was coordinated by the Central Environmental Authority. The committee members consisted of representatives from the Ministries of Health, Labour, Transport, SLTB, CISIR, The National Science Council and the Universities. The committee made several recommendations which were subsequently approved by the Cabinet of Ministers and are presently being implemented by the various agencies concerned.

Excessive smoke emissions from diesel vehicles, is also a major problem that needs to be dealt with on a priority basis. One recommendation of the committee was to obtain smoke meters in order to make quantitative measurements of smoke emissions from vehicles. With the assistance of the people and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, German funds are being utilised in order to import a few smoke meters by the Central Environmental Authority. They are expected to arrive in the country in December, 1993. These smoke meters will be handed over to the Department of Motor Traffic and to the Police, who would use them to check on vehicles suspected of emitting excessive smoke. Vehicles found to emit smoke levels above the stipulated standard will be fined and the drivers of such vehicles will be advised to tune up their engines and maintain the vehicles in such a manner as to keep smoke emissions within the stipulated levels. It has been recommended that fines for a first offence be set at Rs 500.00 and for each subsequent offence at Rs 1000.00

The other recommendations are

1 The feasibility of discontinuing the addition of lead compounds to petrol should be kept under review by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation.

2 The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation should keep a strict control on the sulphur contents of the fuels it markets and of crude oil purchases and reduce the purchase of high-sulphur crude oil.

3 The CEA should monitor lead and sulphur contents, as appropriate, in crude oil shipments and refined fuels regularly.

4 The Ministry of Finance and Planning should initiate action to remove customs duties on fuel injection spares and test rigs.

5 A scheme should be drawn up by the Department of Motor Traffic for phasing out older vehicles which are in unsatisfactory condition.

6 Measures must be taken to improve traffic flows on the streets.

7 All vehicles should be inspected and a Fitness Certificate obtained by owners at least once a year.

8 The Fitness Certificates should be issued by a licensed garage. The German Technical Training Institute of the Sri Lanka Central Transport Board should be requested immediately to carry out a training programme on testing and calibrating fuel injection systems for diesel engines, identify the private sector garages who can under take this work and identify the equipment and training needed. Commissioner of Motor Traffic to look into this.

9 Testing procedures and fees should be reviewed at least every 5 years. Registered testing organizations should procure correct and recommended equipment and machinery. (Ceylon Transport Board Depots could be used for this purpose).

10 A seal should be placed on each fuel injection pump after it is set and this should be inspected by police on spot checks of bleaching vehicles. Regulations to be framed to prevent tampering with the seal.

11 A Testing and Certification Book should be introduced and carried in a vehicle.

12 Offending vehicles should be served with an order of Prohibition. If repairs are not completed in 14 days, the Police may prosecute.

13 Following a conviction, the driver and supervisor/owner of the vehicle should be required to attend a traffic lecture.

14 The CEA should conduct an educational campaign relating to pollution by vehicle exhaust emissions and related aspects.

15 Long-term aspects should be developed and/or reviewed regularly such as the increased transport by water of passengers and goods and the development, where feasible, of the use of electrically-powered rail and road transport.

16 The feasibility of gas operation for certain categories of vehicles should be investigated and kept under review.

Disaster Preparedness Council to be set up

An Act to provide for the establishment of a National Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation council is to be presented in Parliament, stated the Minister of Environment Hon (Dr) Wimal Wickramasinghe recently. The Minister also said that this apex body would deal with the provision of facilities for relief and rehabilitation in the event of any disaster.

He was speaking at a seminar on Natural Hazards, Human Vulnerability and Development.

Hon Minister also stated that a chapter on National and Natural hazard management was included in the five year National Environmental Action Plan.

He further said, that the Government of Sri Lanka has taken important measures regarding the prevention of disaster management.

In 1992 a Country Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and Protection and Preservation of the Environment had been conducted by NORAD in collaboration with the Central Environmental Authority. This study deals with natural disasters of Sri Lanka and suggests a National Disaster Management Plan. The Minister highlighted that in this context a National Disaster Preparedness and Utilization Plan has already been prepared. in 1992 defining the role of the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation & Social Welfare when dealing with natural diasters.

The Minister also said rapid deforestation, could cause increasing natural disasters like landslides,reduction of the water level and creating a green house effect. "Our forest cover percentage in Sri Lanka is diminishing rapidly" The Minister warned. He also mentioned the report issued by the SAARC Secretariat in 1992 dealing with disaster management since it dealt with disasters pertaining to each SAARC country.

Speaking of Sri Lanka's concern about natural disaster prevention, he said that in 1984 there was a seminar on disaster awareness and prevention and again in August a joint seminar was held on the earthsciences and climate leading to an understanding of the hazards of earth slips in Sri Lanka. Speaking about places like Badulla and Nuwara Eliya which are prone to frequent landslides, he said such places should be protected at all cost through sustainable timber extraction and reforestation methods. He said the Governments objective is also to minimise the hazards of land slides by carrying out future development projects in landslide safe areas.

Teachers' Guides On Environmental Education Pre School, Primary, Secondary Level And Text Book Tertiary Level

Design work on the Teachers' **Guides** on Environmental Education for Pre school, Primary School and Secondary School Levels had been completed. The main thrust in the Teachers' **Guides** is to encourage out door action and pupil participation in Environmental activities to strengthen classroom teaching/ learning.

The design work of the Text Book "Man and Environment" for use in Affiliated University Colleges has been completed.

The text will be utilised by the Affiliated University Colleges students and the staff under Environmental studies which is one of the five compulsory core courses to be offered by the Students . The Teachers' guide and the Text **Man and Environment** will be printed by the end of December 1993

Training workshop for Secondary Level teachers that will be involved in trial teaching of Envt. Education was also held to orientate the teachers to undertake trial teaching.

Teachers of pilot schools engaged in identifying environmental problems

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Department. Due to this reason there are a number of saw mills which now come under the attention of the Authority.

Among some of the other industries closely monitored by the CEA are metal quarries, grinding mills, granite, spice, rice and textile factories with dyeing and bleaching operations .

A very common complaint received by the CEA is against noise pollution, caused by saw mills, grinding installations and textile plants.

In the case of existing industries CEA has given industrialists sufficient time to conform to the standards required by CEA.

Majority of the industries have fallen in line with the instructions and guidelines issued by CEA and they have installed adequate precautionary measures to control the pollution. Some others who have not adhered to the instructions are being dealt with by instituting legal action.

The CEA has exercised great care to ensure that industries are given adequate time to reach the prescribed standards while at the same time ensuring relief to any member of the public affected in environmental pollution caused by the operation of such industries.

MINISTER _____

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Environment and Parliamentary Affairs, The Central Environmental Authority, the Ceylon Electricity Board, Central Engineering Consultancy Bureau and representatives of the consultants.

The experts who briefed the Minister explained that among the options available to rectify the leak was (i) Clay blanketing of the reservoir at ingress point at a cost of US $ 5 million (ii) the dry blanketing method which requires the emptying of the reservoir which would take 5-6 years during which there will be no production of electricity.

A continuous sonar sounding system will be used to monitor the proposed 10-20 meter blanket so that the efficiency of the covering can be guaranteed. A seismic survey will also be conducted covering the possible ingress area. Preparatory work on this has already started, including the preparation of an EIA report for the proposed wet blanketing of the reservoir.

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Maligawatta New Town, Colombo 10. Sri Lanka.
Telephone: 449455/449456