

## **Policy Response and Current Policy Thrusts**

49. The on-going initiatives of the Government to improve environment include preventive as well as promotional measures. Various fiscal and monetary incentives are provided by the Government to encourage the installation of appropriate pollution abatement equipment. At the same time, various punitive measures including legal action are taken against the defaulting units.

50. To achieve the goal of pollution abatement, emission and effluent standards for air, water and noise have been notified. Regular monitoring is carried out and the enforcement efforts have been intensified. Majority of identified units have already installed the requisite pollution control equipment. According to the latest data collected by CPCB, out of 1551 units belonging to 17 categories of major polluting industries, 1266 units had facilities to comply with the environmental standards, 130 were closed and 155 were not having adequate facilities.

51. Apart from notification of effluent and emission standards for the major categories of polluting industries, national ambient air quality standards including ambient noise standards have been notified. Industries have been directed to install necessary pollution control equipment within a stipulated time frame. The programme for control of vehicular pollution presently being implemented by the Government involves a progressive tightening of emission norms for new vehicles, introduction of cleaner fuels, effective enforcement and implementation of an inspection and maintenance programme for in-use vehicles, an effective road network, mass transport system and traffic management.

52. The forest conservation strategy has evolved, from dependence on strict regulation of access to and exploitation of forest areas, to incorporating a range of instruments and approaches tailored to specific local situations. The National Forest Policy explicitly recognises the multiple use nature of forest, the rights of local population including the inadvisability of protecting forest resources without their active participation, and the role that forests play in the survival strategies of the poor. The task of regenerating the degraded forest areas and land adjoining forest areas and other protected and ecologically fragile areas and implementation of

eco-development programmes is being undertaken by the National Afforestation & Eco-Development Board.

53. Management strategies adopted to implement the Forest Policy include new initiatives like participatory Forest Management, involving sharing of products, responsibilities, control and decision making authority over forest land between forest department and local user groups based on a formal agreement. Another innovative strategy being tried is the Eco-Development approach, whereby alternative resources and source of income are developed for local communities dependent on protected area resources. Major schemes in the Wildlife sector concentrate on in-situ conservation, protection and development of wildlife and its habitats with ex-situ efforts complementing these thrusts.

### **Other Initiatives**

54. The Policy Statement for Abatement of Pollution indicates adoption of best available clean and practicable technologies, rather than end-of-the-pipe treatment, as the key elements for pollution prevention. As a part of this thrust, the Ministry of Environment & Forests has set up a Clean Technologies Division for identifying cleaner technologies that can be introduced in different development sectors and techniques like coal beneficiation are being promoted.

55. Prior environmental clearance of development projects based on impact assessment is being increasingly emphasised. Such clearance has been made mandatory for 29 specified categories of development projects through statutory notification issued in January, 1994. Public hearings have been made mandatory for all these projects prior to submission of project proposal to the Ministry of Environment and Forests to decide on environmental clearance .

56. The success of the Ganga Action Plan has encouraged its replication for water pollution abatement in tributaries of the Ganga (Yamuna, Gomti and Damodar) under Ganga Action Plan Phase-II (GAP-II). A wider scheme called the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) covering pollution abatement works for grossly polluted stretches in 18 major rivers in 10 States of the country has also been launched. Further, a programme for conservation of selected lakes (NLCP) has been approved for implementation.

57. The National Environmental Tribunal Act providing relief, compensation and restitution to victims of accidents, while handling hazardous substances and for environmental damages has come into force from June, 1995. The Government has also set up a National Environmental Appellate Authority with a view to bring in transparency in the process, accountability and to ensure smooth and expeditious implementation of developmental

schemes and projects. The other Authorities set up by the Ministry include an Environmental Impact Assessment Authority for National Capital Region, a Loss of Ecology (Prevention and Payments of Compensation) Authority for the State of Tamil Nadu, an Authority for Environmental Planning for Thane and a Dahanu Taluka Environmental Protection Authority in the State of Maharashtra.