

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY (NEP), 2006

Earlier Policies on Environment

The National Environment Policy (NEP), 2006 was an effort towards India's commitment to clean environment and making positive contribution to international efforts. The NEP builds on the various earlier policies which had addressed the challenges of environment and need of sustainable development prior to this policy. Some of them were:

- National Forest Policy, 1988
- National Conservation Strategy and Policy Statement on Environment and Development, 1992
- Policy Statement on Abatement of Pollution, 1992
- National Agriculture Policy, 2000
- National Population Policy, 2000
- National Water Policy, 2002

The protection of environment has been mandated in the Constitution in Articles 48 A and 51 A (g), strengthened by judicial interpretation of Article 21.

NEP 2006

- The dominant theme of this policy is that while conservation of environmental resources is necessary to secure livelihoods and well-being of all, the most secure basis for conservation is to ensure that people dependent on particular resources obtain better livelihoods from the fact of conservation, than from degradation of the resource
- The policy also seeks to stimulate partnerships of different stakeholders, i.e. public agencies, local communities, academic and scientific institutions, the investment community, and

international development partners, in harnessing their respective resources and strengths for environmental management

- Involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies has been highlighted.
- It also seeks to revisit the Coastal Regulation Zone notifications to make the approach to coastal environmental regulation more holistic and, thereby, ensure protection to coastal ecological systems, waters and the vulnerability of some coastal areas to extreme natural events and potential sea level rise.
- Environmental Impact Assessment will continue to be the principal methodology for appraisal and review of new projects.
- To achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it

Objectives of National Environment Policy, 2006

- To protect and conserve critical ecological systems and resources
- To ensure equitable access to environmental resources and quality for all sections of society, and in particular, to ensure that poor communities, which are most dependent on environmental resources for their livelihoods, are assured secure access to these resources
- To ensure judicious use of environmental resources to meet the needs and aspirations of the present and future generations
- To integrate environmental concerns into policies, plans, programmes, and projects for economic and social development.
- To ensure efficient use of environmental resources in the sense of reduction in their use per unit of economic output, to minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- To apply the principles of good governance (transparency, rationality, accountability, reduction in time and costs, participation, and regulatory independence) to the management and regulation of use of environmental resources.
- To ensure higher resource flows, comprising finance, technology, management skills, traditional knowledge, and social capital, for environmental conservation through mutually beneficial multistakeholder partnerships between local communities, public

agencies, the academic and research community, investors, and multilateral and bilateral development partners.

Environmental education

Information must be widely disseminated through formal and informal education campaigns so that the required actions for enhanced environmental protection are widely understood. Environmental education for children and adults must be integrated into the education system at all levels.

Basic principles

Empower Communities to Care for their own Environments Local communities, environmental non-governmental organisations and communitybased organisations provide the easiest channels for people to express their concerns and take action to create sustainable societies. However, such groups need the power to act. Communities should be given an opportunity to share in managing their local resources and the right to participate in decisions. Local government bodies, communities, businesses, non-governmental and communitybased organisations and other interest groups should become partners with Central Government in decisions and projects which affect them, their environment, and the resources on which they depend. The co-management of our natural resources is essential to the success of any efforts to protect and conserve.

Government policy also adheres to the Polluter Pays Principle and the Precautionary Principle. As a result, the cost of preventing pollution or of minimising environmental damage due to pollution will be borne by those responsible for pollution. Furthermore, if there are threats of serious irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty will not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Information and participation on biodiversity, environmentally sensitive areas and species

The Government will promote opportunities for the sharing of information on biological diversity among government agencies, the public and private sector, NGOs, CBOs and other special interest groups as well as the involvement of all stakeholders in the development and management of living resources, through the institutionalisation of public participation in the decision making process.

Participation in coastal and marine areas

The Government commits to encourage stakeholder participation in solving problems related to multi-user conflicts in coastal areas in keeping with sound integrated coastal zone management principles and philosophies.

Participation in wetlands

The Government will promote public awareness and understanding of the wetland resources of Trinidad and Tobago and actively encourage participation of landowners, nongovernmental organisations and institutions in wetland conservation.

Participation in water resources

The Government will expand opportunities for participation and collaboration in the development and implementation of water management programmes.

Information on air pollution

The Government will develop a registration programme for all listed activities that emit a listed air pollutant so as to assess their contribution to air pollution, which will lead to the development of an air emissions inventory in Trinidad and Tobago.

Availability of environmental information

Government policy is that public authorities holding information on the environment must make it available to anyone requesting it, subject to certain exclusions. In general, a request can be

refused if it would involve supplying unfinished documents or data or internal communications, or where it is manifestly unreasonable or formulated in too general a manner. Inquirers can be charged a reasonable cost for the information. Public authorities must respond to a request for information within two months but may refuse to provide it, stating their reasons, where it affects; a) Violation of copyright; b) Commercial and industrial confidentiality, including intellectual property; c) Confidential proceedings of public authorities, international relations; d) National security; e) Matters sub judice or under inquiry; f) The confidentiality of personal data and or files; g) Material supplied by a third party without that party being under a legal obligation to do so; and h) Material, which if disclosed, would increase the likelihood of damage to the environment.

Government will ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed of the adverse consequences of development activities and industrial operations in Trinidad and Tobago. This information will be provided through: a) Establishment of public registers in relation to CEC's, Noise, Water, Air and Hazardous Waste Pollution, b) Requesting public review and comment on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's)

Environmental education

Environmental education will stress awareness, information, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation.