

NGT bans plastics from Gomukh to Haridwar

The government had allocated Rs 20,000 crore for its Clean Ganga Mission over five years

BS Reporter & PTI | New Delhi/Mumbai December 11, 2015 Last Updated at 00:42 IST

In a push to one of Narendra Modi-led government's top campaigns, the country's green tribunal has said there would be a complete ban on procurement, storage and use of plastics along the stretch of Ganga from Uttarakhand's Gomukh to Haridwar. The tribunal said the ban would be in force from February, but did not spell out any penalty.

The government had allocated Rs 20,000 crore for its Clean Ganga Mission over five years.

The ban means restriction on use of plastic bottles, including beverage bottles and plastic wrappings of some of the top companies. None of the companies was available for comment.

“Production per se is unlikely to be affected, but companies will have to invest more in pollution control mechanisms. While cost of fresh



Dogra added.

investment will have to be taken on the profit and loss account, the producers of environment saving equipment will see a growth in business. What starts in Uttarakhand today will be sooner or later extended to other states, too, like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, which have similar challenges and huge industries along the river,” said D R Dogra, chief executive and managing director of Care Ratings.

The industries that have to invest in pollution control measures include chemicals, dyestuffs, pharmaceuticals, leather, handicrafts, engineering, textiles and power. "While most of those that will be affected would be smaller companies that have not built structures for waste disposal till now, the larger ones would have to invest more in such processes. Further, if units are shut, the labour employed could face consequences. However, one would expect that most units would comply or seek an extension until such time that they are compliant,”

PUSH TO GANGA REJUVENATION

- Use of plastics of any thickness, including carry bags, plates and allied items, banned from Feb
- The ban means restrictions on the use of plastic bottles, including beverage bottles and plastic wrappings of some of the top companies
- Production is unlikely to be affected, but firms will have to invest more in pollution control mechanisms
- Panel divides cleaning work into different segments, the first segment being Gomukh to Haridwar
- Other segments are Haridwar to Kanpur, Kanpur to UP border, UP border of Jharkhand & from there to Bay of Bengal

The panel divided the cleaning work of Ganga into different segments — Gomukh to Haridwar, Haridwar to Kanpur, Kanpur to UP border, UP border of Jharkhand and border of Jharkhand to Bay of Bengal. “There shall be a complete prohibition on use of plastic, including carry bags, plates, glasses, spoons, packages and allied items, in all cities falling on the river Ganga and its tributaries in Gomukh to Haridwar. Under no circumstances, plastic carry bags of any thickness would be permitted,” a bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar said.

The NGT also spelt out a series of other pollution control measures in the area. Corporate analysts said the NGT's orders are significant, as the country gets ready to meet global pollution control norms.

NGT ORDERS BENEFIT DELHI

- NGT on Thursday fixed the penalties for persistent defaulters of crop residue burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh
- While small landholders having less than two acres of land will have to pay Rs 2500, medium landholders having between two to five acres will have to pay Rs 5,000. Those owning over five acres will have to pay Rs 15,000 per incident of crop burning towards environment compensation
- State governments to provide machinery free of cost to the farmers having less than two acres of land, to farmers having medium land owners at a cost of Rs 5,000 and for the large land holding farmers at Rs 15,000
- NGT also directed Delhi authorities in Delhi to ensure strict adherence to guidelines on noise pollution, special restrictions on noise pollution which are currently in place in Palam and other areas, to be extended to other areas as well
- NGT ordered Delhi government to increase the strength of the forest department and procure better equipments to prevent illegal felling of trees in the national capital

The tribunal, which did not pass any order with regard to nine hydro-power projects in Uttarakhand as the matter is pending in the Supreme Court, said all the projects would build their own sewage treatment plants and make them operational within three months. JSW Group had taken over few of these hydro power projects from Jaypee group for Rs 9,700 crore and it will have to invest in pollution control equipment.

Besides the plastics ban, the NGT also prohibited throwing of any municipal waste, construction and demolition wastes into Ganga and its tributaries, while announcing that violators will have to pay an environmental compensation at the rate of Rs 5,000 per incident.

The green bench held that all the seriously polluting industries, which are operating without consent from Uttarakhand Environment Protection and Pollution Control Board, shall be closed immediately.

On the issue of mining on the river bed, the tribunal said it shall be carried on in a highly regulated manner and under strict supervision.

“No mechanised river bed mining would be permitted. No mechanical excavators would be permitted to operate on the river bed,” it said.