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Govt. of India
Ministry of Environment and Forests
(IA Division)

Email: plahujarai@yahoo.com

Tele fax: 24363973

Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex,
Lodi Road, New Delhi-110003

Dated the June 22, 2009

To

All the Member Secretaries/Secretaries,
State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities/
State Environment Appraisal Committees

Sub: Enforcement of Ambient Air Norms at the project site.

Sir,

As per the provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, the State Level Environmental Impact Assessments (SEIAAs) have been constituted for appraisal of category 'B' projects. Instances have been brought to the notice of Ministry indicating that projects have been proposed in the area where the concentration of the Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) in the Ambient Air is more than the prescribed National standards. A query, accordingly, has been raised as to whether the new projects can be granted environmental clearances if the norms of ambient air quality are already beyond the prescribed limits at the site of the projects.

2. The matter has been examined in the Ministry and it is to clarify that the Ministry has notified National Ambient Air Quality Standards for various land uses for criteria pollutants including Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM). The standards for SPM are different for various land uses.

3. It may be noted that due to changes in the land use pattern, there is a thin differentiation between industrial area and mixed land use. The actual measured values of ambient air quality would also depend upon the equipment and the method used. The air quality would also depend upon the season and the duration of the measurement. Therefore, there are two standards, one for annual average and other one for 24 hours average. These are issues, which need to be addressed during preparation of EIA/EMP Reports.

4. The ambient air quality depends on the geological and meteorological conditions in the area and various industrial activities in the neighborhood. In absence of source apportionment studies, it would be difficult to apportion contribution to SPM from various activities. However, whenever the ambient air

quality standards are nearer to the threshold values, it is advisable to undertake longer duration monitoring for annual average value.

5. In view of the foregoing, the projects need to be examined technically within the ambient notified environmental standards, the land use of the area, various other activities and the proposed environmental mitigation measures covered in the Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

Yours Faithfully,

(Dr. P.L. Ahujarai)
Director