

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/steelmakers-in-bengal-flouting-environmental-norms-cse/485027/>

Business Standard

Saturday, Sep 01, 2012

Steelmakers in Bengal flouting environmental norms: CSE
Kolkata September 1, 2012

Steel plants in West Bengal are blatantly "flouting environmental norms" by polluting land, water and air, according to a green rating survey. New Delhi-based research body Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) studied 21 large steelmakers, 16 of which are from the eastern part of the country, to find out how green and clean the sector is.

"West Bengal accounts for three of these, and all three have fared miserably in the rating," said Chandra Bhushan, CSE's deputy director general and the head of the project. The report was released here on Friday by state Environment Minister Sudarshan Ghosh Dastidar.

Steel sector was found to be using up enormous quantities of resources (land, water, energy and raw materials), polluting blatantly, and getting away with all this because of the sheer apathy of the region's regulatory bodies, the report alleged.

Stating that most of the plants non-compliant with pollution norms, the report said those at the receiving end of all this are the ecology and the local people. With respect to the state pollution control board, West Bengal seems to be in a slightly better position than the other states of the eastern region, according to the report.

CSE surveyors found that the board was good at monitoring and paper work, but "poor on enforcement and bringing about real change on the ground". According to the analysis, the Indian iron and steel sector's energy consumption of 6.6 GCal/tonne is about 50 per cent higher than the global best practice.

Water consumption, including power generation, township and other downstream operations, is around three times the global norm. CSE found that Burnpur plant is the "highest water guzzler" in the country for producing one tonne of steel.

"If all the residual land with steel plants were to be properly utilised, the industry can produce more than 300 million tonnes of steel, not the 75 million tonnes it is producing on Friday. In fact, the steel industry will not need extra land till 2025," the report said.

It was found that more than 50 people die every year in major steel plants of the country as the industry has one of the worst safety records in the world, said the study.

Suggesting improvement in resource management, Chandra Bhushan said, "The industry will have to reduce its ecological footprints drastically, invest in health and safety of its workers and treat local communities as stakeholders and beneficiaries".