

Even The Best Performers Got A Maximum Of 40 On A Scale Of 0 To 100, Finds CSE Study

Iron, steel cos struggle to meet green norms

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New Delhi: The iron and steel industry might be recording an 8% annual growth but it's struggling to meet environmental norms in the process, the Centre for Science and Environment concluded, while rating the industry for its performance. The results of the study were released by environment and forests minister Jayanthi Natarajan and Planning Commission member Arun Maira in New Delhi on Monday.

After a two-year study, the Delhi-based green NGO said that Ispat Industries, Raigad, Maharashtra performed the best among the 21 plants of above 0.5 million tonne per annum capacity, followed by Essar

Steel, Hazira, Gujarat and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (Vizag Steel), Visakhapatnam.

Even the best performers, CSE noted, got a maximum of 40 on a scale of 0-100, with the steel industry performing on an average far below the global best and one of the worst performers when compared to other large industries that CSE has rated previously, such as the cement, paper and pulp industry. A majority of the companies, the study found, did not meet environmental compliances even if the units had often secured certification for high level of environmental and safety management systems.

"For us, this rating has come as a bit of shock. We ourselves are shocked with the scale of



Untreated waste flowing out of the Tata Steel plant at Jamshedpur

non-compliance. This sector has the ability to fix it as it has money, most of the companies are profitable," said Sunita Narain, director general of CSE.

The Bhusan Steel Ltd, Dhenkanal, Monnet Ispat and Energy Ltd, Raigarh, Chhattisgarh and SAIL, IISCO, Burnpur, West Bengal, plants perform-

ed the worst in the rating that used 150-parameters to assess the green credentials of the companies. Narain pointed out the lack of voluntary disclosure and participation in the process by all but one of the SAIL units and said it was mostly the bad performers that had hidden information during the public audit process.

She said the industry was making large profits and expanding rapidly. Only the players that faced higher input and raw material costs and were investing in efficiency, did environmental improvement as a co-benefit. Narain said the industry did not have a level-playing field and the companies with the advantage of captive ores and low costs were per-

forming worse than those with little cost headroom. The government would look to implement the roadmap CSE had recommended for upping the environmental standards and norms for the industry, Natarajan said.

Chandra Bhusan, deputy director general of CSE, noted that iron and steel plants were found to be using 1,200 hectares of land per million tonne of installed capacity on an average, while they could operate on 200 hectares per mtpa of steel. The extra land in hands of the industry, if utilized, could ensure that no more controversial acquisition would be required for the next 20 years even as the sector expands at existing rate, he added.