

## UNIT III - AIR AND NOISE POLLUTION

### 3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) of 1986 is a key legislation in India aimed at protecting and improving the environment and regulating hazardous activities. The act was enacted in response to the growing concerns over environmental degradation and pollution caused by industrialization and urbanization.

#### Key Objectives

1. **Protection of the Environment:** To safeguard the environment, which includes air, water, and soil, from pollution and degradation.
2. **Improvement of Environmental Quality:** To enhance the quality of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.
3. **Regulation of Hazardous Waste:** To regulate hazardous substances and promote safe handling and disposal methods.
4. **Development of Environmental Standards:** To establish standards for the quality of air, water, soil, and noise.

#### Main Provisions

1. **Definition of Key Concepts:**
  - "Environment": Includes water, air, and land, and the interrelationship that exists among these.
  - "Hazardous Waste": Waste that can cause danger or harm to human health or the environment.
2. **Power to Notify:**
  - The government has the authority to notify areas that require protection, regulate discharges of pollutants, and control hazardous substances.
3. **Environmental Clearance:**
  - Projects that may have a significant impact on the environment must undergo a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before approval.
4. **Standards for Pollution:**
  - The Act empowers the central government to set standards for emissions and effluents, ensuring compliance to protect environmental quality.
5. **Penalties and Offences:**
  - The Act prescribes penalties for non-compliance and provides for legal actions against offenders, including fines and imprisonment.
6. **Role of Central and State Boards:**
  - Establishes the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) to monitor, assess, and report on environmental quality and pollution control.

## 7. Environmental Protection Authority:

- The government may appoint an authority to oversee the enforcement of the Act and implement various environmental policies and regulations.

### Important Amendments & Related Acts

- The EPA has undergone several amendments over the years to strengthen environmental governance.
- Related acts include:
  - Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
  - Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
  - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
  - Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

### Impact and Achievements

- The EPA has facilitated the establishment of regulatory frameworks for pollution control, waste management, and environmental assessment.
- It has led to improved air and water quality in many regions and raised public awareness regarding environmental issues.

### Challenges

- Implementation and enforcement of the Act remain challenging due to lack of resources, corruption, and coordination between various government bodies.
- Industrial growth often leads to conflicts between development and environmental protection.

