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**Toxics Link : Britain's Environment Agency confirms huge e-wast**

**CLEAN INDUSTRY > HAZARDOUS WASTE > E-WASTE ARTICLES**

**Britain's Environment Agency confirms huge e-waste outflow to India**

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Over the years, Toxics Link has been regularly claiming that large quantities of electronic waste (e-waste) is dumped onto Indian shores in the name of recycling. E-waste is a hazardous waste; as per the Basel Convention as it contains several toxics like heavy metals, PVC plastics, brominated flame-retardants, etc, which are a hazard to environment and human health.

Last month a report by the British Environment Agency (BEA) indicated that there are several companies exporting e-waste from the UK to India, Pakistan and China. It warned the companies involved in the export of e-waste to comply with the rules, or risk prosecution by the Environment Agency.

The report comes as a warning; the Environment Agency has announced the stepping up of activity to identify illegal exports. It is in the process of identifying around 23,000 tonnes of waste that may be being shipped to non-OECD countries in the Far East, the Indian sub-continent, West Africa and China without the right authorisation from the Environment Agency.

The report was compiled on behalf of the Environment Agency by the Industry Council for Electronic Equipment Recycling (ICER) and is being used to help target investigative and enforcement work by Environment Agency officers.

Under the current rules, no waste, including electrical or electronic waste, can be sent abroad for disposal. Waste electronic equipment containing hazardous material and which is destined for minor repair may be exported but must first be authorised by the Environment Agency. It is illegal to send any hazardous waste, including hazardous electrical or electronic waste, to a non-OECD or developing country for disposal or recovery.

This report shows companies in England and Wales are not always following the rules or are unaware of the rules. The Environment Agency is cracking down on illegal waste exports by: "Setting up a dedicated special enforcement team that will step up the number of random inspections carried out at ports across England and Wales and prosecute offenders where there is evidence of illegal activity."

According to BEA, e-waste exports are worth hundreds of millions of pounds. Last year, such waste involved tens of thousands of old computers, 500,000 television sets, three million refrigerators, 160,000 tonnes of other electrical equipment and millions of discarded mobile phones, all sent to Asian countries like India, China and Pakistan.

On the other hand, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Government of India's regulatory and monitory body, continues to deny that e-waste is coming into India. It is high time that the Government and Port Authorities in India implement the Hazardous Waste Rules and check the illegal imports of hazardous e-waste at the entry points itself. E-waste is included in the List A and B of Schedule 3 of the Hazardous Waste Rules, 2002, where its import is restricted.

Over the years, Toxics Link has released several groundbreaking reports on the status of e-waste, which have revealed that more than 70% of electronic waste collected in the recycling units of Delhi was actually exported or dumped by developed countries such as the USA. In India this waste is subjected to primitive and highly polluting recycling operations, which contaminates air, water and impacts the health of workers.

Movements of hazardous wastes of all kinds is meant to be defined, and controlled or prohibited under the terms of the Basel Convention -- an international treaty under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Government of India should heed the warnings contained in the BEA report. The people of India deserve better than to live in a veritable dustbin. India needs to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment, and check the illegal imports of e-waste.

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