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India sets up 'green court' to make polluters pay

NEW DELHI: India launched a "green" court Tuesday to make polluters pay damages as it steps up its policing of the country's environmental laws.

Environment minister Jairam Ramesh said India was only the third country in the world after Australia and New Zealand to set up such a tribunal.

"This is the first body of its kind (in India) to apply the polluter pays principle and the principle of sustainable development," Ramesh told reporters in New Delhi.

"Anybody and everybody can approach the tribunal to claim civil damages arising out of inadequate implementation of environment laws," said Ramesh, who has been carving out a reputation as a green crusader.

Ramesh has insisted that India's desire for fast economic growth must not come at the expense of the environment.

The tribunal, which will operate around India, is to be made up of members who are environmental experts and has powers to "try all matters related to and arising out of environmental issues", said a government statement.

The move to launch the tribunal was the latest sign of a tougher approach by India to improving its green track record as concerns mount about the impact of growing industrialisation on air and water quality, forests and wildlife.

On Monday a government panel urged that clearance granted to South Korean steel giant POSCO for the construction of a 12-billion-dollar plant in eastern India be scrapped due to environmental concerns.

In August, the government rejected plans by British-based Vedanta Resources to mine bauxite in an area held sacred by Indian tribespeople and also cited "serious violations" of environmental rules .

Can lawyers save the world?

That was the question posed by BBC [Radio 4's Costing the Earth](#) programme; Resonance FM's Climate Radio examined [Ecocide and the Law](#) , and Environmental Justice Foundation's No Place Like Home: [A Legal Point of View](#) took a virtual Polly to the Maldives to speak at the [Hay Festival Maldives](#) whilst she was participating in the [World Forum of Spiritual Culture](#) in Astana, Kazakhstan, explaining how law based on intrinsic values can be used to effect a global shift in consciousness.

New Internationalist magazine's November issue examines Humans v's Nature and puts [Ecocide in the Dock](#); Treehugger picked up on the eerily similar [comparisons between climate change and slavery](#) ; meanwhile Big Picture TV popped by to do a bit of filming and asked the question [How do we give Ecocide legal status?](#)



