

## 60% E-WASTE RECYCLING LIKELY BY 2023

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

All aboard: Electronic goods such as laptops and phones will come within the ambit of the new rules. File photo

Consumer goods companies and makers of electronics goods have to ensure at least 60% of their electronic waste is collected and recycled by 2023 with targets to increase them to 70% and 80% in 2024 and 2025, respectively, according to a draft notification by the Environment Ministry made public this week.

The rules also bring into effect a system of trading in certificates, akin to carbon credits, that will allow companies to temporarily bridge shortfalls.

A wide range of electronic goods, including laptops, landline and mobile phones, cameras, recorders, music systems, microwaves, refrigerators and medical equipment, have been specified in the notification.

### Public feedback

India, which is unique among South Asian countries in that it has a formal set of rules for electronic waste management, first announced these rules in 2016 and amended it in 2018. The latest rules, which have been put up for public feedback, are expected to come into effect by August.

Along with specifying targets, the rules also lay out a system of companies securing extended producer responsibility (EPR) certificates.

These certificates certify the quantity of e-waste collected and recycled in a particular year by a company and an organisation may sell surplus quantities to another company to help it meet its obligations. "The earlier rules stressed collection targets. Now we are emphasising on the EPR, recycling and trading. This follows from the government's objective to promote a circular economy," Naresh Gangwar, Additional Secretary, Environment Ministry, told *The Hindu*.

Companies will have to register on an online portal and specify their annual production and e-waste collection targets.

The chief entity that will coordinate the trade of EPR certificates and monitor if companies are meeting their targets is the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

### Dealing with delays

Specifically, a steering committee to be headed by the Chairman of the CPCB will oversee the overall implementation of these regulations. Companies that don't meet their annual targets will have to pay a fine or an "environmental compensation", but the draft doesn't specify the quantum of these fines. In fact, companies that fall short can meet a year's target, even after three years. Those that meet their targets with a year's delay will be refunded 85% of their fine, and 60% and 30% after the second and third year, respectively.

In March 2020, the government said it more than doubled the electronic waste (e-waste) it recycled in 2018-19 over 2017-18. This translated to a 10% recycling rate in 2017-18 rising to a

little over 20% in 2018-19.

The EPR also requires producers to set up e-waste exchange facilities to facilitate collection and recycling, and assign specific responsibility to bulk consumers of electronic products for safe disposal.

The State governments have been entrusted with the responsibility of earmarking industrial space for e-waste dismantling and recycling facilities, undertaking industrial skill development and establishing measures for protecting the health and safety of workers engaged in the dismantling and recycling facilities for e-waste.

The e-waste produced in India as per the data provided by the government is lower than estimates by international agencies.

According to the Global E-Waste Monitor 2017, India generates about 2 million tonnes (MT) of e-waste annually and ranks fifth among e-waste producing countries, after the U.S., China, Japan and Germany.

Most of India's e-waste is recycled by the informal sector and under hazardous conditions and a thrust of the e-waste rules is to have more this waste be handled by the formal sector.

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