

Taiwan passes  
first consumer  
protection law

TAIPEI, Jan 12: Taiwan's parliament passed the island's first consumer protection law on Tuesday, setting stiff penalties for makers of products that harm consumers, a parliamentary spokesman said, reports Reuter.

Under the law, firms must bear product liability even if there is no negligence or have an intent to harm, the spokesman said. Previously, companies could be punished only if they were deemed to be negligent or have an intention to harm.

"This is only a beginning... consumer protection has entered a new realm," Chang le-Chi, Chairwoman of the Private Consumer's Foundation, told reporters.

"It may take some time before companies adapt but they should realise that the law is also designed to upgrade their products," she said.

Approval of the law was delayed for four years by opposition from the business community. It requires designers, manufacturers and service industries to pay compensation of up to three times the value of a product found to pose a health or security hazard.

Violators of the law will also face fines of up to Taiwan dollar 1.5 million (56,000 US dollar) and prison terms under criminal laws. Media running false advertisements may also be held liable.

**Industries guilty  
of pollution  
facing punishment  
in India**

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Indian industries guilty of polluting the environment, heedless of warnings to clean up their act, are finally facing punishment as the Indian government cracks the whip - to the relieved applause of green activists, reports AFP.

Fifty large - and medium-sized industrial units, identified as delinquents, are on a "hit-list" prepared by the Environment Ministry, whose patience has run out after a year's wait for them to install pollution-control equipment.

"They cannot be allowed to continue to pollute the environment and play with the ecological system and the health of the people," said Environment Minister Kamal Nath.

Water and electricity supplies to the polluters - alcohol distillers, thermal power plants and manufacturers of sugar, cement, leather, steel and fertiliser - would be cut off, officials said.

As a last resort, polluters will be asked to shut down their factories, said D.K. Biswas, Chairman of the Central Pollution Control Board.

"They have been given enough time," Biswas told AFP.

— AFP photo

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