



ENVIRONMENT

Simplifying Green Clearances in Goa: Self-Declarations, Empaneled Inspectors and Perpetual Renewals under Water-Air-Environment Acts

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In a bold bid to dismantle the regulatory roadblocks that has long impeded small and medium enterprises in Goa, the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) issued Circular No. 8/25/2025-PCB/Tech/7452 on 1 July 2025. Rooted in the enabling provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and the [Environment \(Protection\) Act, 1986](#), the circular re-engineers the consent architecture by introducing graduated compliance paths, self-certification for modest units, third-party certification for larger ones, and automatic three-year renewals for almost everyone. The objective is unmistakable: shrink timelines, cut transaction costs, and yet retain environmental integrity through calibrated oversight.

Background and Legislative Canvas

The Board's power to simplify consent procedures emanates from the wide rule-making and delegation clauses embedded in the parent statutes. Section 25 of the Water Act and Section 21 of the Air Act empower State Boards to prescribe the form, manner and conditions for grant or refusal of consent. Section 5 of the Environment Act further allows the Central Government to delegate authority to State agencies for implementing pollution-control measures. By harmonising these provisions, the 2025 circular operationalises the policy mandate of "Ease of Doing Business" without trespassing the substantive standards mandated by law.

Objects of the Circular in Full Relief

The circular seeks to dismantle the "one-size-fits-all" model that treats a micro-unit and a mega-factory alike. It differentiates regulatory intensity on the basis of capital investment, ₹50 lakh is the bright-line threshold, thereby sparing smaller entrepreneurs from disproportionate compliance costs while reserving rigorous scrutiny for capital-intensive projects. Simultaneously, it promises automatic, near-frictionless renewals so that businesses are not held hostage to bureaucratic calendars.

Self-Certification Regime for Consent to Establish and Consent to Operate

Industries investing up to ₹50 lakh may now obtain both CTE and CTO by submitting a single online application accompanied by a self-certification in the form prescribed as Annexure-A. The promoter must affirm compliance with all previous conditions, certify that no expansion or process change has occurred, and declare the absence of any show-cause notice, closure order or pending litigation under Section 33A of the Water Act, Section 31A of the Air Act or Section 5 of the Environment Act. Payment of the normal consent fee remains mandatory, but the physical inspection stage is dispensed with, placing the onus squarely on the entrepreneur's sworn statement. Any false or partial disclosure invites prosecution under the relevant penal provisions of the three Acts as well as the Information Technology Act, 2000 and under criminal laws.

Third-Party Inspection and Certification for Larger Units

Projects breaching the ₹50-lakh investment ceiling must route their CTE and CTO applications through accredited environmental auditors. The Board will empanel inspection agencies through a transparent Expression-of-Interest process scrutinised by a Technical Expert Committee constituted under Annexure-B. Once empanelled, auditors are selected randomly for each assignment, thereby minimising discretion and the risk of regulatory capture. Their brief covers verification of compliance with consent conditions, environmental clearance stipulations, stack monitoring results and any sector-specific parameters notified from time to time. The entire cost of the audit is borne by the project proponent. Importantly, the circular carves out two exceptions: where a public complaint has been received or a legal dispute is pending, the Board reserves the right to revert to direct inspection, ensuring that third-party certification does not become a shield for non-compliance.

Auto-Renewal of Consent to Establish Irrespective of capital investment, every CTE may now be auto-renewed for a further three-year term. The promoter need only file an online requisition in the form of Annexure-C along with a scanned copy of the last CTE and recent site photographs. No additional consent fee is charged, and the renewal is processed on an administrative basis unless the unit falls within the excluded categories, closure orders or unresolved court proceedings. This measure effectively converts the CTE into a rolling permission, reducing the regulatory life-cycle for green-field projects.

Auto-Renewal of Consent to Operate

The same philosophy of perpetual validity is extended to the CTO, albeit with a slight procedural twist. Units up to ₹50 lakh submit the Annexure-A self-certification and pay the prescribed renewal fee, whereas larger units must upload the most recent third-party inspection report along with the fee payment. Once these documents are received, the Board issues an automatic three-year extension. The renewal is denied only if the unit is under a formal closure order or embroiled in litigation before the National Green Tribunal, any appellate authority or other judicial forums. The circular thus balances the promise of continuity with a safety valve for egregious violations.

Safeguards Triggered by Closure Orders and Pending Litigation

The liberalised regime is not a carte blanche. The circular expressly withholds the benefits of auto-renewal from any industrial unit against which a closure directive, whether under Section 33A of the Water Act, Section 31A of the Air Act, or Section 5 of the [Environment Act](#), has been issued and remains un-complied with. Similarly, if a matter involving the unit is sub judice before the National Green Tribunal, a civil court or any appellate body, the automatic renewal clock is paused until final adjudication or satisfactory compliance. These carve-outs reassure civil society and the judiciary that procedural simplification will not dilute substantive environmental accountability.

By grafting a risk-based compliance matrix onto the existing statutory edifice, the GSPCB has demonstrated that administrative reform and ecological vigilance can coexist. Entrepreneurs gain speed and certainty; regulators retain the power to intervene where risk escalates. Whether the experiment will withstand judicial scrutiny or spawn a new genre of compliance culture remains to be seen, but for now Goa has offered a template that other States may profitably study.

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