It is the government’s duty to protect the environment but they are unable to do so and instead they accuse the judiciary of encroaching upon its territory, Supreme Court judge Justice Vikramajit Sen on Tuesday said.

“It is government which is supposed to protect the environment but increasingly, we find, for various reasons, that the government is unable to do this task. But that is primarily because politics is the main chase. You need an electorate to give votes. It is expensive exercise and therefore you have to increasingly depend on big businesses which exploit environment,” Justice Sen said.

Speaking at the release of Jindal Global Law Review’s special issue on Environmental Law, the judge said no government is interested in environment and is on the lowest priority list and taken as an obstacle to industrialisation.

“Increasingly, we hear from the government and bureaucracy that we are going into areas which is not expected of judiciary. What does the judiciary do A and B have a dispute and we are expected to decide. But what about the constitutional vision. Are we supposed to look the other way when we see degradation at such a large-scale? Or is it our duty, as a member of higher judiciary, to take note of it,” he said.

“Governments think that we are encroaching on their territory but the reality is that we are doing very little to protect the environment. Any judge who is mindful will put environment on his priority list,” Justice Sen said.