

FURTHER TRANSPARENCY IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST CLEARANCES

The Ministry is pleased to announce the introduction of a new and dynamic system of online publication of all pending environment and forest clearances on our website. The interface is designed to display all relevant details while ensuring ease of navigability. A system has been put in place to update the website on a regular periodic basis so as to ensure that the information is not redundant or obsolete.

Environment

1. The Developmental Projects and activities are appraised for environmental clearance under the provisions of EIA Notification, 2006. The category 'A' projects are appraised at MoEF level and category 'B' projects are considered by the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) constituted by the Ministry in consultation with the respective State Governments. Presently, 22 SEIAAs/SEACs have been constituted.
2. For technical appraisal of projects, sector specific Expert Appraisal Committees (EACs) have been constituted in the Ministry for consideration of category 'A' projects. These sectoral Committees are for Industrial, Thermal Power & Coal Mining, Non-Coal Mining, River Valley, Infrastructure & CRZ, and Construction projects.
3. For increasing transparency, various steps have been undertaken, from time to time including uploading of information on project status in public domain. To make the website on Environmental Clearance more user friendly and to have easier navigation, it has been redesigned with the following features :
 - a. The projects have been categorized based on their receipt in the Ministry (received before 30th April, 2009 and received after 30th April, 2009). The list of pending projects received before 30th April, 2009 would be static in nature and would be updated on every Friday till liquidated.
 - b. Before 30th April, 2009, 700 projects were awaiting EC/TORs. Due to various steps taken since then the pendency has been brought down to 210 projects as on 30th June, 2009 (break-up is enclosed).
 - c. The status of projects received after 30th April, 2009 would be given elaborately with each projects having a unique File No. and complete chronological case history till a decision on grant of environmental clearance is taken. There will be necessary links to the TORs issued, public hearing details, Minutes of the EAC meeting concerned and final letter of approval or rejection issued. It is proposed to upload video proceedings of public hearing shortly. This list would also be updated on a fortnightly basis.
 - d. For enhancing the transparency and to streamline the appraisal procedure, Circulars have been issued from time to time which cover the levels of decision making, processing of projects, avoidance of the use of Section 7(ii) of the Notification relating

to exemption of public hearing, uploading of monitored data on website etc. These circulars have been uploaded on the redesigned web-page for information of all concerned.

- e. The other related information which could be viewed concerns the composition of Expert Committees, Dates and venue for the EAC meetings along with the agenda and the minutes of the meetings.

Forests

1. Forest Clearance is granted under the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980. The procedure envisaged under the Act mandates a two stage approval process.
 - a. Stage I: In principal approval: Upon a *prima facie* review the proposal is either accepted or rejected. If approved the project authority is required to deposit an amount for compensation of the opportunity cost of the forest (NPV, Compensatory Afforestation, Additional expenses towards mitigating probable environmental damage etc.)
 - b. Stage II: Following the deposit of the above mentioned costs, the land is handed over to the project authorities provided they have obtained all other requisite clearances.
2. Given that the Query form used for clearance application is drafted in the same format as the one for Environmental clearances, a similar interface as the one used for environmental clearances will be used. This will also ensure uniformity of standards.
3. The information displayed will be on a state-wide basis displaying details of sectors and categories. The same shall be updated on a fortnightly basis.

These measures have been undertaken primarily for the benefit of the various stake holders including, but not limited to, Central and State Government officials, NGOs, Project Proponents and Scholars. It is our hope that this move will allow them to have a more comprehensive access to relevant details concerning the status of various projects submitted for environmental clearance.

This is part of an ongoing initiative to make the work of the Ministry transparent, responsive and businesslike.