



# Environment Impact Assessment

**For Prelims:** EIA Notification 2006, United Nations Environment Programme

**For Mains:** Environment Impact Assessment

## Why in News?

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified **amendments to the [Environmental Impact Assessment \(EIA\) Rules](#)**, making several exemptions to **gaining environmental clearance**.

- A new EIA Notification was promulgated by the MoEF&CC in 2006 to scrutinize all relevant information about a project or activity in order to assess (and accordingly mitigate) its potential adverse impacts on the ecology of a region. Amendments were made in 2016, 2020 and 2021.

## What is EIA Notification 2006?

- **Decentralisation of Project Clearances:** It classified the developmental projects in two categories:
  - **Category A** (national level appraisal): projects are appraised by Impact Assessment Agency (IAA) and the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC).
  - **Category B** (state level appraisal): State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and State Level Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) provide clearance to the Category B projects.
- **Introduction of Different Stages:** The Amendment introduced four stages into EIA Cycle; Screening, Scoping, Public hearing and Appraisal.
  - **Category A** projects require mandatory environmental clearance and thus they do not have to undergo the screening process.
  - **Category B** projects undergo a screening process and are further classified into B1 (Mandatorily requiring EIA) and B2 (Not requiring EIA).
- **Projects with Mandatory Clearance:** Projects such as mining, thermal power plants, river valley, infrastructure (road, highway, ports, harbours and airports) and industries including very small electroplating or foundry units are mandated to get environment clearance.

## What are the Exemptions?

- **Strategic and Defence Projects:**
  - Exempts highway projects of strategic and defence importance, which are 100 km from the **[Line of Control](#)**, among other locations, from an environmental clearance before construction.
    - Highway projects related to defence and strategic importance in border states are

sensitive in nature and in many cases need to be executed on priority keeping in view strategic, defence and security considerations.

- The exemption to be accorded to highways of strategic importance **does away with the need for green clearance for construction of the controversial [Char Dham project](#)**, which includes widening of 899 km roads in ecologically sensitive areas of Uttarakhand to improve connectivity to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri shrines.
  - The case is presently being heard in Supreme Court, which has set up a high-powered committee to look into the matter.

▪ **Biomass Based Power Plants:**

- Thermal power plants up to 15 MW **based on [biomass](#) or non-hazardous municipal solid waste** using auxiliary fuel such as **coal, lignite or petroleum products up to 15%** have also been exempted — as long as the fuel mix is eco-friendly.

▪ **Ports and Harbour dealing in Fish:**

- Fish handling ports and harbours with less pollution potential compared to others, and caters to small fishermen, **are exempted from environmental clearance.**

▪ **Toll Plazas:**

- Toll plazas that need more width for installation of toll collection booths to cater to a large number of vehicles, and expansion activities in existing airports related to terminal building expansion without increase in the airport's existing area, rather than expansion of runways, etc., are two other projects exempted.

## What is the Environmental Impact Assessment?

▪ **About:**

- As per [UNEP \(United Nations Environment Programme\)](#) EIA is a tool **used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts** of a project prior to decision-making.

▪ **Aim:**

- To **predict environmental impacts at an early stage** in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decision-makers.

▪ **Process:**

- **Screening:** First stage of EIA, which determines whether the proposed project, requires an EIA and if it does, then the level of assessment required.
- **Scoping:** This stage identifies the key issues and impacts that should be further investigated. This stage also defines the boundary and time limit of the study.
- **Impact analysis:** This stage of EIA identifies and predicts the likely environmental and social impact of the proposed project and evaluates the significance.
- **Mitigation:** This step in EIA recommends the actions to reduce and avoid the potential adverse environmental consequences of development activities.
- **Reporting:** This stage presents the result of EIA in a form of a report to the decision-making body and other interested parties.
- **Public hearing:** On completion of the EIA report, public and environmental groups living close to project site may be informed and consulted.
- **Review of EIA:** It examines the adequacy and effectiveness of the EIA report and provides the information necessary for decision-making.
- **Decision-making:** It decides whether the project is rejected, approved or needs further change.
- **Post monitoring:** This stage comes into play once the project is commissioned. It checks to ensure that the impacts of the project do not exceed the legal standards and implementation of the mitigation measures are in the manner as described in the EIA report.

[Source: IE](#)

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