



Science for Society

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Science in Thinking

BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY

All India Committee

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Registration No. S/86180 of 1996-97 under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961

A Voluntary Organization Committed to the Cause of Science, Culture and Scientific Outlook

To,
The Secretary,
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi 110 003

Date: June 30, 2020

Sub: Request to extend the notice period for public participation on draft EIA 2020 and put the same on hold

Respected Sir,

We write this letter requesting you to extend the notice period and to put the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020 notification on hold till the COVID-19 crisis ends. The Central Government released the draft Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020 vide S.O. 1199(E) dated March 23, 2020, in the official gazette on April 11, 2020.

It is near impossible that all concerned groups can participate in a democratic discussion with the Ministry amidst a global health pandemic when there are physical distancing measures and restricted public movement in force. Already many objections to the draft EIA 2020 have been made, which include shortening the period of public consultation hearings to a maximum of 40 days, reducing the time provided for the public to submit responses to a mere 20 days for applications seeking environment clearances, allowing the declaration of "economically sensitive areas" without a public hearing or environmental clearance, increasing the validity of the environment clearance for mining projects to 50 years versus the present 30 years, etc.

As of today, there are many projects which violate the Environment Act, but many of them have been approved simply by serving such industries with a warning and by regularizing the violations with one-time exemption or by condoning them. The impact and the brunt of such decisions are borne by the common people. In such a situation there is a need to tie up the loose ends and make the Environment Act and its implementation more stringent. It is rather appalling that the draft EIA2020 aims to reduce the financial commitment of industrialists by compromising on environment protection. At a time when India has become the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change, when the world's 15 most polluted cities are in India, we have a right to expect the MOEFCC to make the formulation EIA more inclusive. For this purpose, we urge you to extend the time for public consultation on EIA 2020. It is reported in the media that officials within the ministry have suggested an extension of date up to August 30, which was not complied with.

In this background, we urge upon you not to proceed with undue haste and to put the draft EIA 2020 on hold till the COVID-19 crisis ends.

Thanking you,

Truly yours,

D. Mukhopadhyay

Soumitro Banerjee

Dhrubajyoti Mukhopadhyay
President

Soumitro Banerjee
General Secretary