

No. NH-11060/1/87-NHIII/DI

Dated the 5th March 1987

Subject: Environmental clearance procedure in respect of developmental projects

A copy of the D.O. letter No. 6/30/81-Env. 5(IA) dated 7.11.1986 from Secretary (Environment) to Secretary (Exp.) on the subject mentioned above is enclosed for information and necessary action.

Copy of D.O. letter No. 6/30/81-Env. 6(IA) dated 7th November, 1986 from Secretary, Deptt. of Environment, New Delhi to Secretary (Expenditure), Ministry of Finance, New Delhi.

Subject: Environmental clearance procedure in respect of developmental projects

Kindly refer to D.O. letter No. 397/SE/86(I) dated 19.9.1986 on the above subject. The project proposals in respect of various developmental activities such as mining, thermal power plants, industrial projects, hydro-electric river valley projects, ports and harbours, beach resort etc. are referred to the Department by the respective Ministries for granting environmental clearance.

1. Problems encountered in clearing development Projects :

- (i) Absence of information on environmental aspects in the project reports or submission of inadequate data even though Guidelines & Checklists have been made available to the project authorities.
- (ii) Projects are referred to Department of Environment at a very late stage and often the construction work is already in progress.
- (iii) EIS Report/EMP required are either not submitted at all or are too sketchy.
- (iv) Environmental cells/Groups are conspicuous by their absence in most of the Development authorities and the approach adopted on environmental matters is still ad-hoc. Lack of technical expertise and lower priority assigned results in delay in preparation and submission of EMP/EIS.
- (v) Even in the absence of data on environmental aspects needed for assessment of the project, the proponents plead for approval in the basis that whatever safeguards are suggested would be strictly implemented. Implementation, however, does not take place and therefore, now the insistence to obtain the details before hand.

2. Procedure being adopted for clearance of Projects.

The developmental projects are examined by the Expert Appraisal Committees constituted by the Department in different areas. The Expert Committees constituted by the Department are : —

- (i) Inter-ministerial Environmental Appraisal Committee for River Valley Projects
- (ii) Inter-ministerial Committee for Mining Projects
- (iii) Thermal Power Appraisal Committee
- (iv) Environmental Industrial Appraisal Committee

The various developmental projects are first scrutinized for ensuring that the required information and relevant details have been furnished by the project authorities. After the information is received, supplemented by data collected through field visits by special teams constituted by the Department for major projects, the projects are placed before the respective Committees for detailed examination from environmental angle and for suggesting necessary preventive and mitigative measures.

The projects which involve forest land are required to be examined for clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

3. If the information is furnished in detail, the project is considered and decision given within a maximum period of 3 months. The Committees meet at least once every month.

4. As a general policy it is suggested that :

- (a) The Department of Environment and Forests should be consulted while selecting the site for all new major projects;
- (b) No expenditure on "Preliminary Works" should be permitted in anticipation of approval-technical, economical, environmental & forest angles.

- (c) Work started on projects as in 'b' above should be frozen until all approvals are obtained.
- (d) Environmental Management Groups should be created in all major development agencies to prepare and implement EMPS.

I shall be grateful if you put these issues across to the development departments.