

Soon, Energy Projects may Undergo Green Checks

KEEPING TABS Govt-approved auditors will do random compliance monitoring of environment clearance conditions at mines, power plants etc

New Delhi: The government plans to make projects such as power plants, mines and oil and gas exploration ventures and expansion initiatives subject to checks by independent auditors to ensure they are complying with environmental conditions and prevent the kind of public protests that erupted in Tamil Nadu over the Vedanta group's copper unit earlier this year.

The government-approved auditors will conduct randomised, third-party compliance monitoring of environment clearance conditions, according to a draft notification of environment ministry. This will be effected by the environment ministry introducing a new rule in Environment Impact Assessment Notification of 2006, which will allow it to empanel agencies for carrying out

such studies.

"Notwithstanding the above provisions, the ministry will empanel government institutions of national repute for carrying out compliance monitoring of environment clearance conditions of projects and activities," according to the proposed rule, under paragraph 10 on Post-Environmental Clearance Monitoring.

"The compliance monitoring will be done inter-alia against the baseline information available in the Environmental Impact Assessment report, Environmental Management Plan appraised by EAC (Environmental Audit Committee), terms and conditions of the environmental clearance as well as other provisions as may be specified by the ministry from time to time."

Any project categorised as A, B1 or B2—graded thus as per industry and size of project—requires environmental clearance. Based

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Environment ministry has issued a draft notification to add a new rule in Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006

→ New rule would introduce the concept of randomised third party audit of implementation of environment mitigation measures

→ At present, there is no system to ensure these mitigation measures (on whose basis environmental clearance is granted) are being implemented on ground



on recommendations of expert committees at central, state and district levels, prior clearance is given along with stipulations on environmental mitigation measures. Every firm or project proponent is required to file six-monthly compliance reports.

There are currently no safegu-

ards to check whether these environmental clearance conditions are being adhered to on ground.

"These environmental compliance measures are vital as they mitigate or minimise adverse environmental impact of the project and activities," a senior environment ministry official told ET.

Capital's Fuel Price Advantage over Noida, Ghaziabad Evaporates



New Delhi: Delhi's filling stations may no more be the preferred destination for drivers from Noida and Ghaziabad as the recent oil surge has eroded the Capital's price advantage. A price difference of ₹3-4 per litre had encouraged drivers for years to fill up at Delhi's pumps. But tax rates in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi have become nearly equal. Delhi's petrol prices have surpassed that of Noida and Ghaziabad. On Tuesday, a litre of petrol cost ₹81.82 in Noida, ₹81.69 in Ghaziabad, and ₹82.16 in Delhi. Diesel rates were ₹74.10 per litre in Noida, ₹73.96 in Ghaziabad and ₹73.87 in Delhi. SANJEEV CHOUDHARY

"Be it a small mining project or a nuclear power plant, mitigation measures need to be followed."

The new rule also comes after sharp criticism by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) last year of India's environment clearance processes. CAG had audited projects cleared between Ja-

nuary 2011 and December 2015 and pointed out that despite clear environmental violations not a single project had been penalised. It had recommended that the environment ministry should consider third-party evaluations on-ice projects, including expansion plans, get off the ground.