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The Hindu
Rajasthan Patrika (Hindi)
Deccan Chronicle
Deccan Herald

M.P. Chronicle
Aaj (Hindi)
Indian Nation
Nai Duniya (Hindi)
The Times of India (A)
Blitz

and documented at Bhagirath(English)& Publicity Section. CWC.

Half of approved projects violated green norms: CAG

LOOPHOLES Report said violations ranged from untreated sewage discharge to tree cover not maintained and violators not penalised

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NEW DELHI: Illegal withdrawal of ground water, cutting trees without permission, and discharge of untreated waste water were some of the green norm violations by project proponents detected by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

"Environment clearances were granted to project proponents without checking compliance of conditions mentioned in previous environment clearances and recommendations of regional offices," said the report tabled in Parliament on Friday.

Depicting several loopholes in the ministry's approval process, the report, based on approval given to 4,534 projects between 2008 and 2015, accused the ministry of failing to monitor its own approvals conditions to protect the environment.

More than half of the requisites for approval termed as general and specific conditions were not met by project implementers and the ministry failed to take strict action against them, the report said, naming several public enterprises such as the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) as violators.

"No penalty has been imposed on even a single violator in the last two years," was the stark remark of the government's auditor in its first appraisal of the ministry's environmental clearance process. It hauled the ministry up for failing to delegate penalty powers to its regional offices that monitor implementation of approval conditions.

Under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), the ministry is

Going against the rules

The CAG discovered what activists had been saying for a long time — that there existed gaping holes in the implementation of green rules. Here is what it found:

Violations of green norms

77% In these cases, required green belt across project sites was not maintained

50% Actual approval of competent authority was not taken before cutting trees

12% Ground water was used without requisite approvals

13% Environment audit reports were not submitted to the state pollution control boards

Non-compliance of green conditions

50% Violation in meeting 13 general environment conditions applicable to all projects

57% Violation in meeting specific conditions for projects

23% In these irrigation cases, catchment area treatment was not carried out

Monitoring

- No separate monitoring cells set up for 98 big-ticket projects
- Biennial environment audit of 32 critically polluted areas not done
- No penalty imposed on violators in the last two years

mandated to appraise and approve infrastructure projects and ensure that conditions imposed on project proponents to protect environment are met.

The National Democratic Alliance government has amended the green norms over a hundred times over the last two years in the name of ease of doing business for faster clearance. The process had caused heartburn within the government, with economic ministries blaming the environment ministry of blocking growth through a "long drawn" and "cumbersome"

approval mechanism.

The CAG found that the environment had suffered at the cost of faster clearances, with several project proponents not implementing basic conditions such as not discharging waste water without treatment, replenishing ground water, and having adequate green belt around project sites.

The CAG also said the ministry had failed to appoint a national regulator to oversee the environmental clearance process as directed by the Supreme Court in 2011.

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Projects cleared faster in 2015: CAG

'62 had irregularities in the way they got public consent'

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Delays in granting environmental clearance (EC) to projects fell in 2015 after consistently rising between 2011 and 2014, according to a report tabled in Parliament by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). India's public accounts watchdog also found that 62 projects examined by it had "irregularities" in the way they garnered public consent.

Of 2,898 projects – spanning coal mining, industry, non-coal mining, construction, infrastructure and river valley and hydro electric project – granted EC between 2011 and 2015 (until July), the CAG chose 208 from across the country and analysed them to check if they were cleared within the prescribed 105 days. Nearly 90% of them were delayed with a project, on average, getting delayed by 86 days in 2011 and spiking to 316 days – or almost a year – in 2014.

Though the average delay for seven months of 2015 had reduced to 238 days, it also saw some projects delayed by as many as 1002 days.



Taking stock: 2015 also saw some projects delayed by as many as 1,002 days. MANOJ CHOWDHURY

2013 was a tumultuous year in the Environment Ministry with the then Environment Minister, Jayanthi Natarajan, accused of delaying environmental clearance to major projects, suddenly quitting her post. In January 2015, Ms Natarajan told *The Hindu* that she got "specific requests" from Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi regarding clearance for certain projects.

Reasons for delay

After the NDA government came to power, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar introduced a provision, whereby project developers could submit their applications online. In a reply to the CAG, the Environment Ministry said reasons for delay were in moving

documents from the Central Registry sections to the impact assessment divisions, opening specific files for submitting to the Member Secretary concerned, insufficient skilled hands, a glut of projects for clearance between 2011-2014, and insufficient information and clarification from project developers.

Sixty two of the 216 projects scrutinised had problems with the way they conducted their public consultation process that involves discussing the impact of project with villagers or residents. For instance, the CAG notes, in a coal mine expansion project of M/S Jindal Steel and Power Limited in Chattisgarh, there was a 318-day delay in completing the consultation proceedings.

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REDRESSAL BODY FOR NARMADA OUSTEES SET UP, MP GOVT TELLS SC

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NEW DELHI: The grievance redressal authority (GRA) to decide on disputes over compensation to the oustees of Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) on river Narmada, has been set up, the Madhya Pradesh government has told the Supreme Court.

The state government informed a bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar that in pursuance to the apex court's March three direction, five benches of the GRA have been appointed.

The bench, which also comprised Justices DY Chandrachud and SK Kaul, noted the submission of Additional Solicitor General PS Patwalia that in compliance with the court order, an office memorandum was issued on March 9 indicating the appointment of five benches of GRA.

The apex court on March 3 had asked the state government to approach the high court for sparing two judicial officers to preside over the GRA for deciding the compensation disputes of the oustees.

It had directed the state chief secretary to approach the registrar general of the high court and seek a recommendation in this regard.

The bench had earlier said that to ensure a "better deal" for the project-affected families, it was willing to "twist the arms" of the executive and asked Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) and the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra to suggest names of experts who could be appointed to the committee which would deal with the issue of resettlement and rehabilitation of the oustees.

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केंद्रीय जल आयोग के नए अध्यक्ष बने नरेन्द्र कुमार

नई दिल्ली, (वार्ता): केंद्रीय जल अभियांत्रिकी सेवा के 1979 बैच के अधिकारी नरेन्द्र कुमार केंद्रीय जल आयोग का नये अध्यक्ष बन गए हैं। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान रुड़की से सिविल इंजीनियरिंग में बीई और आईआईटी दिल्ली से स्ट्रक्चरल इंजीनियरिंग में एमटेक की उपाधि प्राप्त श्री कुमार ने आज कार्यभार संभाल लिया। श्री कुमार इससे पहले आयोग में सहायक निदेशक, डिजाइन संगठन, उप निदेशक परियोजना मूल्यांकन निदेशालय और बांध सुरक्षा संगठन एवं परियोजना निगरानी निदेशालय में निदेशक के पद पर कार्य कर चुके हैं। वर्ष 2002 से 2005 तक जल संसाधन मंत्रालय के कमान क्षेत्र विकास एक में वरिष्ठ संयुक्त आयुक्त के रूप में कार्य कर चुके श्री कुमार वर्ष 2009 से 2011 तक ब्रह्मपुत्र और बराक घाटी शिलांग के मुख्य अभियंता रहे हैं। इसके बाद वह मंत्रालय में आयुक्त भी रहे हैं।

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