Environment & Ecology · GS - III

How does the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2020 differ from the existing EIA Notification, 2006?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - III	Environment & Ecology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Environmental Impact Assessment; prior environmental clearance; post-facto clearance; public consultation; compliance reporting; project exemptions; environmental governance; sustainable development

Model Answer

Introduction

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) evaluates the likely environmental consequences of proposed projects before approval. The EIA Notification, 2006, established the existing framework, while the draft EIA Notification, 2020, proposed several changes that generated debate over environmental protection and ease of doing business.

Major proposed differences

- **Compliance reporting:** The 2006 framework generally required half-yearly compliance reports, whereas the draft proposed annual reporting.
- **Public consultation:** The draft proposed reducing the notice period for public hearings from 30 days to 20 days.
- **Project exemptions:** It proposed exemptions from prior clearance or public consultation for certain categories of projects, raising concerns about reduced scrutiny.

- **Post-facto clearance:** The draft's provisions and treatment of projects operating without prior clearance raised concerns about whether violations could be regularised after they occurred.
- **Strategic projects:** The draft proposed changes to disclosure and public consultation for certain projects classified as strategic.
- **Regulatory approach:** Supporters argued that procedural changes could improve administrative efficiency; critics argued that they might weaken public participation and preventive environmental safeguards.

Assessment

A streamlined process can reduce unnecessary delays, but environmental assessment must remain rigorous, transparent and scientifically credible. Public participation is especially important for communities exposed to displacement, pollution and ecological risks.

Conclusion

The central challenge is to reconcile timely project approvals with environmental protection. Efficient administration should strengthen compliance and scientific assessment rather than dilute prior scrutiny or meaningful public consultation.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP