



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

EIA Amendment 2026 — Streamlining Delays or Bypassing Environmental Scrutiny?

 **DOWN TO EARTH**

25 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**ENVIRONMENT****POLITY****GS PAPERS****GS2****GS3****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

Free UPSC & State PCS Resources

ujiyari.com

EIA Amendment 2026 – Streamlining Delays or Bypassing Environmental Scrutiny?

Down to Earth

25 March 2026

GS2

GS3

DTE Down to Earth

MAINS RELEVANCE:

GS Paper 2

GS Paper 3



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"MoEFCC proposes new bodies (SAEIA, SCEIA) to bypass state-level delays in environmental clearances. Does this strengthen governance or dilute environmental safeguards?"

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) published a draft notification on March 5, 2026, proposing amendments to the EIA Notification 2006, creating two new bodies – SAEIA (Standing Authority on EIA) and SCEIA (Standing Committee on Environment Impact Appraisal) – to handle delays when state-level appraisal bodies lapse.

The Editorial Argument

Down to Earth argues that while the intent to address institutional delays is legitimate, the proposed amendment creates **bypass mechanisms** rather than fixing the underlying problem of weak state-level environmental governance. Creating parallel central bodies risks further centralising environmental decision-making and diluting the federal character of environmental governance.

What the Amendment Proposes

CURRENT SYSTEM	PROPOSED CHANGE
State Expert Appraisal Committees (SEACs) appraise Category B projects	When SEACs lapse or are non-functional, SAEIA (Standing Authority on EIA) takes over
State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) grants clearance	When SEIAA lapses, SCEIA (Standing Committee on Environment Impact Appraisal) takes over
Delay = project stuck in limbo	Delay = project moves to central body for clearance

The Problem Being Addressed

State-level environmental appraisal bodies face chronic dysfunction:

- **SEACs and SEIAAs** have fixed tenures; when members' terms expire, the bodies lapse
- Re-constitution often takes **6-12 months** due to bureaucratic delays
- During this period, **all Category B projects** (smaller projects requiring state-level clearance) are stuck
- This creates a **perverse incentive** for states to delay reconstitution to benefit certain projects

Why the Fix Is Controversial

The editorial identifies several concerns:

- 1 **Centralisation vs federalism:** Environmental governance is on the **Concurrent List**; shifting appraisal to central bodies when states “fail” undermines cooperative federalism
- 2 **Capacity vs intent:** Creating new bodies does not address the root cause — states lack trained environmental scientists and technical staff
- 3 **Regulatory capture risk:** Central bodies may be more susceptible to industry lobbying than distributed state bodies
- 4 **Precedent:** This approach could be replicated in other domains — creating central bypasses for every state-level delay
- 5 **Democratic deficit:** State-level bodies have better local knowledge of ecological sensitivity

The EIA Framework in India

COMPONENT	DETAIL
Parent legislation	Environment Protection Act, 1986
EIA Notification	September 14, 2006 (S.O. 1533)
Categories	A (central — EAC/MoEFCC) and B (state — SEAC/SEIAA)
Category B subdivision	B1 (requires EIA study) and B2 (no EIA required)
Public hearing	Mandatory for A and B1 projects
EIA stages	Screening → Scoping → EIA Study → Public Hearing → Appraisal → Decision

What Should Be Done Instead

The editorial recommends:

- 1 **Automatic reconstitution:** Mandate that SEACs/SEIAAs are reconstituted within 30 days of term expiry, with a standing panel of pre-approved experts
- 2 **Capacity building:** Train state-level environmental scientists through a dedicated cadre under MoEFCC

- ③ **Digital EIA platform:** Make the **PARIVESH** portal fully functional for state-level clearances to reduce process delays
- ④ **Performance audit:** Publish annual performance data for all SEIAAs and SEACs — clearance rates, pendency, rejection rates

UPSC RELEVANCE

EIA Notification 2006, Category A/B projects, SEAC, SEIAA, Environment Protection Act 1986, PARIVESH portal

Environmental governance; Centre-State relations; institutional design and regulatory reform

EIA process; environmental clearances; development vs conservation

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

EIA AMENDMENT 2026 (DRAFT):

Published: March 5, 2026 by MoEFCC

New bodies proposed: SAEIA + SCEIA

Trigger: state-level SEAC/SEIAA lapses

Amends: EIA Notification 2006

EIA FRAMEWORK:

Parent Act: Environment Protection Act, 1986

EIA Notification: 2006 (S.O. 1533)

Categories: A (central) and B (state)

B1: requires EIA; B2: no EIA needed

Public hearing: mandatory for A and B1

PARIVESH portal: single-window for environmental clearances

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE BODIES:

EAC: Expert Appraisal Committee (central)

SEAC: State Expert Appraisal Committee

SEIAA: State Environment Impact Assessment Authority

NGT: National Green Tribunal (est. 2010)

MoEFCC: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Environment on Concurrent List (7th Schedule)

Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (amended 2023)

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (amended 2022)

NGT Act, 2010

PARIVESH: Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive and Virtuous Environmental Single-window Hub

Sources: [Down to Earth](#), [MoEFCC](#)

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

 [Read Full Article on Ujyari](#) →

<https://ujyari.com/editorials/2026/03/eia-amendment-2026-saeia-bypass/>

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujyari.com