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# EIA rules amended: projects near LoC, those of strategic value won't need green nod

The EIA is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.

By: **Express News Service** | New Delhi |

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In this file image, a convoy of Army vehicles is seen moving towards Ladakh after the Galwan faceoff in May 2020. (PTI Photo/File)

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has notified amendment to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Rules, exempting highway projects of strategic and defence importance, which are 100 km from the Line of Control, among other locations, from an environmental clearance before construction.

The EIA is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development. This assessment also takes into account human health and socioeconomic impact on the community living in the proposed project area.

## EDOT

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### All-clear for controversial project

The exemption to be accorded to highways of strategic importance does away with the need for green clearance for construction of the controversial Char Dham project, which includes widening of 899 km roads in ecologically sensitive areas of Uttarakhand to improve connectivity to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri shrines. The case is presently being heard in Supreme Court, which has set up a high-powered committee to look into the matter.

In its latest amendment to the Rules, published on July 14, the ministry has made several exemptions to gaining this environmental clearance.

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Thermal power plants up to 15 MW based on biomass or non-hazardous municipal solid waste using auxiliary fuel such as coal, lignite or petroleum products up to 15 per cent have also been exempted — as long as the fuel mix is eco-friendly,

according to the notification. “In order to encourage such activities, the Central Government deems it necessary to increase the threshold capacity for such Thermal Power Plants for which Environmental Clearance shall not be required,” it stated.

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Taking into account issues of livelihood security of fishermen involved at fish handling ports and harbours, and the less pollution potential of these ports and harbours compared to others, **increasing the threshold of ports which exclusively deals in fish handling, and caters to small fishermen, will be exempted from environmental clearance**, the ministry stated.

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**Toll plazas that need more width for installation of toll collection booths to cater to a large number of vehicles, and expansion activities in existing airports related to terminal building expansion without increase in the airport’s existing area, rather than expansion of runways, etc.,** are two other projects exempted.

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For projects of strategic importance, the ministry’s notification says, “Highway projects related to defence and strategic importance in border States are sensitive in nature and in many cases need to be executed on priority keeping in view strategic, defence and security considerations. In this regard, **the Central Government deems it necessary to exempt such projects from the requirement of Environmental Clearance in border areas, subject to specified Standard Operating Procedure along with standard environmental safeguards for such projects for self-compliance by the agency executing such projects.**”

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