SC Stays Project in Uttarakhand Forested Area
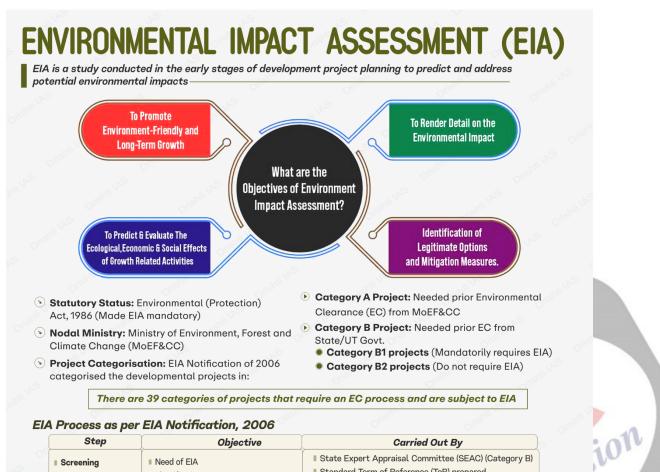
Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court has halted a major hotel development in the **Bhimtal-Mukteshwar region** due to concerns raised in a petition about extensive deforestation in the lush **Jilling Estate area**.

Key Points

- According to the court, the thickly forested patch was permitted to be deforested for a hotel project, which intends to carry out construction activities on an area of 20,000 square feet.
    - It would cause **irreparable damage to the fragile ecology** of the area that could adversely impact the interest of the state to maintain adequate **forest cover.**
- The main issue lies here is that the High Court permitted construction to go ahead without the mandatory environmental clearance under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification of 2006.
    - SC had recently expressed serious concern over the lackadaisical approach of the state government in controlling forest fires that recur every year.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA is a study conducted in the early stages of development project planning to predict and address potential environmental impacts

What are the Objectives of Environment Impact Assessment?

- To Promote Environment-Friendly and Long-Term Growth
- To Render Detail on the Environmental Impact
- To Predict & Evaluate The Ecological, Economic & Social Effects of Growth Related Activities
- Identification of Legitimate Options and Mitigation Measures.

- **Statutory Status:** Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 (Made EIA mandatory)
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)
- **Project Categorisation:** EIA Notification of 2006 categorised the developmental projects in:

- **Category A Project:** Needed prior Environmental Clearance (EC) from MoEF&CC
- **Category B Project:** Needed prior EC from State/UT Govt.
  - **Category B1 projects** (Mandatorily requires EIA)
  - **Category B2 projects** (Do not require EIA)

There are 39 categories of projects that require an EC process and are subject to EIA

EIA Process as per EIA Notification, 2006

Step	Objective	Carried Out By
Screening Scoping	Need of EIA Identifies important issues for EIA	State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) (Category B) Standard Term of Reference (ToR) prepared by MoEF&CC with EAC/SEAC for Category B Projects"
Public Consultation	Addresses concerns of affected people	State Pollution Control Board (SPCB)/ UT Pollution Control Board (UTPCB)
Project Appraisal	Scrutiny of Final EIA Report/ Environmental Management Plan (EMP)	EAC for category A Projects and SEAC for category B1 Projects
Decision Making	Granting EC	Category A: MoEf&CC Category B: State EIA Authority (SEIAA)
Monitoring (Post EC)	Compliance of general and specific conditions	SPCB / UTPCB and Regional Offices

Government Initiatives For EC

- **PARIVESH (Proactive and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous, and Environmental Single Window Hub):** Single Window System for EC
  - Developed by MoEF&CC and National Information Centre (NIC)

- **Environmental Information System (ENVIS):** Collect, Collate, Storing, Retrieving and Disseminating Information Related to the Environment Sector
- **Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 2020:** Published by MoEF&CC to replace existing EIA Notification, 2006

Drishti IAS