

## **Biodiversity clearance norms would add another layer of complexity for industry: FICCI**

**NEW DELHI, October 10, 2012.** In response to a statement made by the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Ms. Jayanthi Natarajan, ahead of the UN Summit on Biodiversity in Hyderabad, for separate biodiversity clearance or norms for the development projects, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has stated that such a move is likely to have an adverse impact on the progress of infrastructure and development projects in the country.

Mr. R. V. Kanoria, President, FICCI says “Adding additional layers of clearances may be counterproductive and result in diluting the positive sentiment arising out of the recent spate of reforms that the government has announced”.

The Minister had expressed her opinion to integrate biodiversity clearance into environment and forest or both clearances at whichever level it operates. However, the move to add biodiversity conservation as a new criterion to grant environment and forest clearance will further harden the process of obtaining green clearances. While FICCI understands the noble cause aimed at enhancing conservation of biodiversity, an integration of biodiversity conservation into the existing norms of clearance would only add another layer of complexity for industry. FICCI believes that industry has a responsible role to play in the sustainable use and management of biodiversity. However, responsibility on this front needs to be driven in a cooperative and collaborative spirit and not through coercion.

The Biodiversity Act, 2002, had already made provision for assessing the environmental impact of a project on biological diversity and to avoid or minimize any adverse impact and provide for public participation in the assessment where appropriate.

With procedural delays and rejections in environment and forest clearance impacting numerous industrial and developmental projects, sectors such as mining and power projects have been hit hard. Another stringent clearance norm would only turn out to be a major stumbling block stalling the growth of various development projects.

So far the country has lacked in building infrastructure fast enough to cope with the needs of the expanding economy because environmental approvals have become harder to come by, besides other hurdles such as land acquisition. If clearances, particularly environment and forest clearances to various projects are delayed, project execution will be severely hampered.

Rather than including biodiversity as another layer in the clearance process, FICCI believes the need of the hour is to promote the cause of biodiversity through mass awareness programmes and sensitize Indian industry towards sustainable use and management of biodiversity.

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