



What is the Star Rating System? How This Move To Rank States On The Pace of Green Clearances May Trigger Unhealthy Competition By Subverting Regulation (150 Words / 10 M) (GS-3 EIA)

Approach:

1. Introduction – define & describe the Star Rating system.
2. Mention how it can negate the EIA.
3. Conclusion

The star rating system is proposed to “**rank**” and “**incentivise**” States on how “quickly” and “efficiently” they can accord environmental clearances. It spells out seven criteria to rate SEIAAs on “**transparency, efficiency and accountability**”.

On a scale of 7, an SEIAA will get more points (two marks) for granting a clearance in less than 80 days. Similarly, an SEIAA will get low points (one mark) for granting clearance within 105 days and no marks will be awarded for more than 105 days. If less than 10% of the projects for scrutiny prompted a site visit by committee members, to examine ground conditions, an SEIAA would get one mark. More than 20%, on the other hand, would be a demerit or zero marks. SEIAA with a score of **seven** or more would be rated ‘**five star**.’

How Star Rating interferes with Environment Impact Assessment ?:

- State committees are currently hampered by having too few independent environmental experts and decision-making is being left to bureaucrats. Bureaucrats might have a tendency to neglect the environmental concerns of the projects due to the associated economic benefits of the projects.
- The **Legal Initiative for Forest on Environment** (LIFE), a prominent environment organisation, described the proposal as “violative” of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The task of the SEIAA is to undertake a ‘detailed scrutiny’ whereas this notification makes them **rubber stamp authorities**.
- It **undermines the role of regulatory oversight** in environmental protection.
- The scheme might lead to **unhealthy competition amongst states** to clear the projects as early as possible.

The government has to understand **Ease of Doing Business rankings** are **not the sole determinants of actual investment flows**. The recent **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021** highlighted concerns such as a **decline in forest cover** in the Northeast, degradation of natural forests, etc. So, the government must take steps to protect the environment in all feasible ways, especially by **curbing the diversion** of forest land for non-forest use.