

AN OPEN LETTER TO VEERAPPA MOILY, THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

14.01.2014

Shri Veerappa Moily,
Union Minister for Environment and Forests,
Government of India

Dear Mr Moily,

Greenpeace India is an independent campaigning organization that has been working in India since 2001 on the most pressing environmental issues of our times. Our work is focused on stopping climate change, protecting forests, wildlife and biodiversity, and promoting renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. Our independence and strength comes from the fact that Greenpeace India is supported by over 2 lakh individual Indian financial donors.

I am writing this letter on behalf of Greenpeace India to express our deep sense of dismay at your speedy clearance of 70 projects worth over 1.5 lakh crore within a span of 20 days, after you took over as the Minister for Environment and Forests. We are further alarmed at your announcements about your intention to clear many more in the next few weeks.

As a Minister for Environment and Forests, you are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that development does not lead to destruction of forests and wildlife and does not trample upon the lives and livelihood of people who are dependent on these forests. It is also the responsibility of the Environment Minister to ensure that rich biodiversity of the country is not compromised in the name of development. The very idea behind the existence of the ministry is not to give 'speedy' clearance to projects but to safeguard the environment and wildlife. We are deeply distressed at the casual way the ministry has dealt with important environmental concerns around the projects that had been held back due to close scrutiny by your predecessor, Ms. Jayanthi Natarajan

With so many years of experience behind you, it is surprising that the impropriety of your decisions, particularly its timing does not strike you as odd. Every project proposal that goes for environmental clearance has several stake holders - there are corporates, environmental groups working to protect forests, wildlife, bio-diversity and rivers, and people living in the affected areas. The law requires equal opportunity to all stake holders when a project is cleared. You have given speedy clearances by ignoring all the stakeholders, except the corporates. Ministry of Environment and Forests is the key ministry for non-corporate stake holders in development to assert their rights. Your actions have failed to protect their rights.

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Just to mention the example of the POSCO project. You have cleared the file even without a forest clearance. You have ignored all stake holders in Western Ghats who have been protesting against the plunder of environment in the area, giving weightage only to the corporates.

In fact, given the fact that you already hold the portfolio of Petroleum and Natural Gas, there is a clear case of conflict of interest in your presiding over the Environment Ministry, a situation that is rarely seen anywhere else in the world.

In view of your complete failure to uphold the interests of environment, we respectfully demand that you immediately resign as the Minister for Environment and Forests.

Regards,



Samit Aich
Executive Director,
Greenpeace India

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