Concerns with EIA

What is the issue?

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In recent times various projects have used the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to subvert the environment.

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What is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)?

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- EIA reports are a critical component of India’s environmental decision-making process in that they are supposed to be a detailed study of the potential impacts of proposed projects.
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- Based on these reports, the Environment Ministry or other relevant regulatory bodies may or may not grant approval to a project.
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- The EIA reports are also important to define measures that the project could take in order to contain or offset project impacts.
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- To ensure that they are an accurate account of scientific facts and observations, the law mandates the engagement of an accredited independent EIA consultant to undertake the study.
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What are recent concerns with EIA?

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- The EIA reports of the redevelopment projects are an exercise in the worst possible research practices and ethics.
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- Recently the consultant for a project has used material from copyrighted papers, webpages and other EIA reports.
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- It even mentions that the water quality study was undertaken in 2015, one year before the project was commissioned to NBCC.
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- Such research practices in EIAs continue unabated because of the Environment Ministry's failure to come down heavily on this.
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- There are many instances of missing or misleading information which understate the potential impact of these projects.
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- The report is also oblivious to the many archaeological and cultural heritage sites that will be affected by the construction.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- The EIA Notification 2006 says that "deliberate concealment and/or submission of false or misleading information or data…" can lead to a rejection of the application or cancellation of the approval.
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- In a world that is challenged by environmental degradation and social conflicts, scholars have upheld public participation to be a "threshold condition" for development.
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- EIA-based approvals for most projects also involve the process of conducting public hearings in order that the views and opinions of people who are likely to be affected can be taken on board before a decision to approve the project is made.
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Source: The Hindu

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