

THE HINDU Business Line

Eco Ministry clearing projects within a year, says Jayanthi Natarajan

Our Bureau



Business Line Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests, and Dr M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, MSSRF, handing over mobiles to members of the fishing community, at the Foundation Day of MSSRF, in Chennai on Sunday. - Bijoy Ghosh

Chennai, Aug 7:

The Ministry of Environment and Forests is being wrongly projected as the stumbling block for any delay in major projects. On the contrary, the Ministry has been clearing all the projects within the mandated time frame of less than one year, according to Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests.

“There is absolutely no time taken on clearing the projects. On review of the Ministry, it was found that 71 per cent of the projects in less than five hectares are cleared by the State Governments; 17 per cent by regional offices of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and that only nine per cent of the projects that are over 100 hectares come to the Ministry for clearance.

“We clear within the mandatory time, which is less than a year,” she told newsmen.

“All projects will be considered strictly on the yardstick of environmental sustainability,” she told reporters after inaugurating the International Conference on Mangroves for Coastal Area Management, organised by the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation.

To a question on her priorities after taking over the Ministry last month, Ms Natarajan said, “my first priority is to dispel the notion that environment is the enemy of growth. Without environment, there can be no growth,” she said.

Bellary – illegal mining

On the Bellary mining issue in Karnataka, Ms Natarajan said, “What is going on in Bellary is illegal mining.” Based on the Supreme Court's order to provide details on export and import from the region, the Ministry on Friday filed an affidavit on the same.

An order was also passed by the Court allowing mining only in Government-owned mines, she said.

“I do not think there is any problem on the mining issue. I believe that it is being sensationalised, probably on lack of information.

The imperatives are very simple. We have specific rules and guidelines on protection of forests and it will be followed before any grant is given. It is important to ensure that there is clarity and consistency in the grant of all permissions by the Ministry,” she said.

Tamil Nadu

Referring to Tamil Nadu, the Minister said it is a matter of great satisfaction that there is an awareness on environment even as the Chief Minister on Thursday surveyed the Chennai city with regard to environment and making the city free of plastic bags, and bringing in necessary regulations.

“I welcome this approach of the State Government and we will do everything in our power to cooperate with them,” she said.

Earlier, in her inaugural address, Ms Natarajan said the MoEF has initiated an integrated coastal zone management project with the assistance of the World Bank.

Under this project, the hazard mapping is being carried out for the entire country with Survey of India and to build capacity and undertake research in coastal management.

A national centre for sustainable coastal management at Anna University is being established in collaboration with identified eleven State-level research institutions, including the M.S. Swaminathan Research foundation, she said.

Keywords: [Bellary mining](#), [Ministry of Environment and Forests](#), [Ms Jayanthi Natarajan](#), [Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests](#), [International Conference on Mangroves for Coastal Area Management](#), [M.S. Swaminathan Foundation](#)

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