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# Run research papers past us, govt tells Dehradun-based WII

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DEHRADUN: The ministry of environment, forest, and climate change (MoEF&CC) has asked the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII), an autonomous body under the ministry that often does environmental impact assessments (EIA) for proposed government projects as well as independent research, to run its work past the ministry before making it public.

The communique said, “It has been observed that several such documents/knowledge products brought out by WII, which contain recommendations or observations with respect to activities for which Centre's permission is required under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, or which have a bearing on policy issues pertaining to wildlife conservation

in India, are not being referred to this ministry beforehand for approval.”

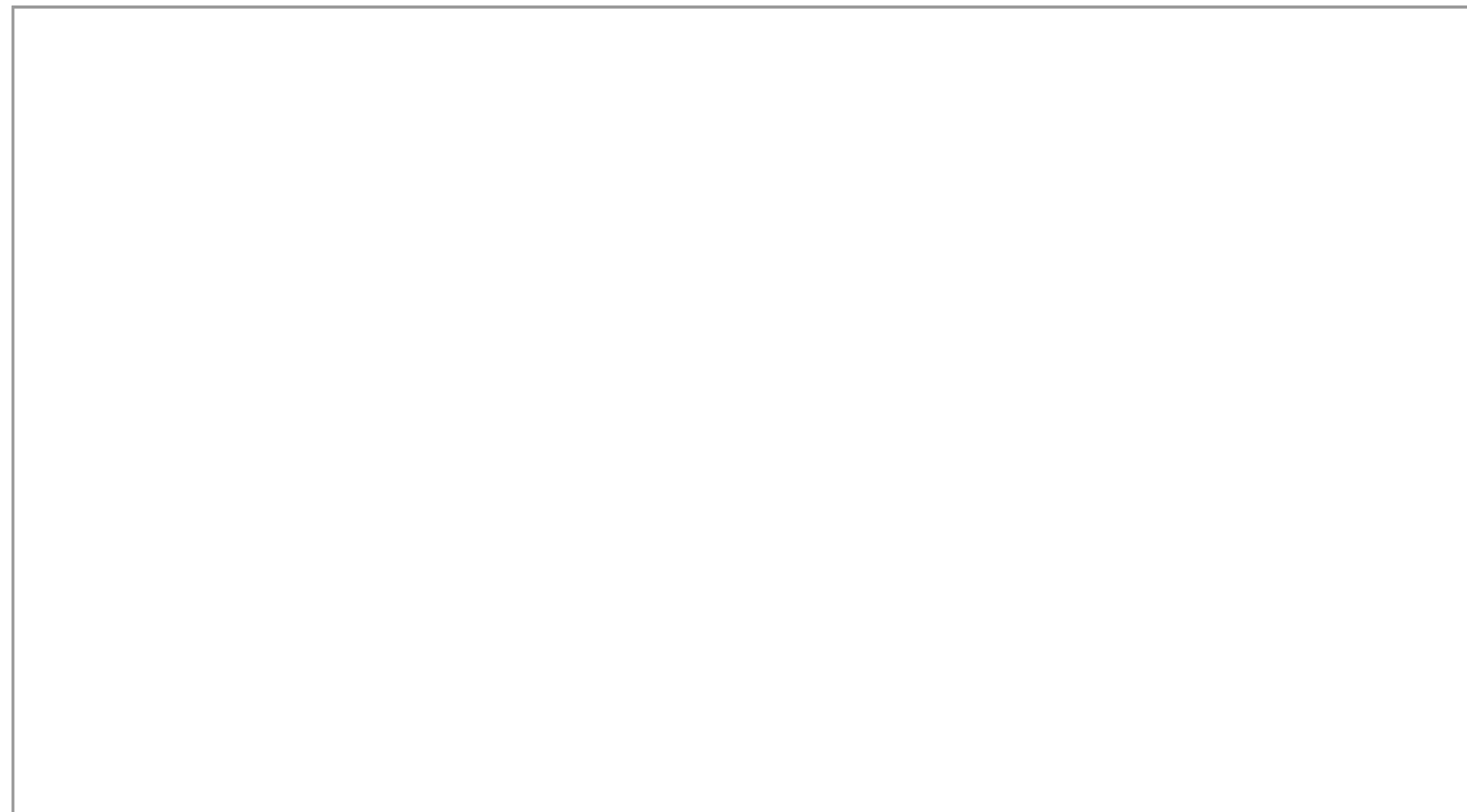
'Young WII scientists grappling with 'anxiety & confusion over govt order'

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The order, which was issued in April and has been accessed by TOI, has dampened morale in the institute with many WII scientists saying they "do not appreciate such a screening process" and that "the move would impact the scientific temperament of researchers". It may propagate "pseudo-science", they added.



Interestingly, the communique reminded the researchers that MoEF&CC was their "parent ministry."

WII has been an autonomous body since 1986 and this is the first time, scientists said, that they were asked to submit work for

"scrutiny" before it was released.

"All research is as per ethics and integrity of the ministry. We strongly believe in publishing nothing but science. This order is confusing as it doesn't clearly mention the reason behind its need and whether it is applicable to personal research or not," said a WII scientist who did not wish to be named. Another scientist added, "Internal discussions have taken place in the institute among the scientists about the order and we are very concerned about its impact." He added, "We are hoping that these orders are applicable only to those projects that are coming through the government and not to personal research that is the brainchild of scientists. That precious research comes to us only after years of experience and hard work in the field, combined with arduous studies and collaboration with national and international scientific communities." Many young scientists said they were grappling with "anxiety and confusion" over the order. One such scientist said, "We understand that countries such as China have government-driven research work but we are better placed as compared to those scientists. However, we hope that the government does not intervene to mellow down the findings of studies, even if it is related to government projects."

The genesis of this order is being attributed to two reasons by the fraternity. "Either it is the fallout of a long battle between bureaucracy and scientists over supremacy, or maybe the government wants more control over scientists for 100% compliance with their projects," a senior forest officer, in the know of things, said.