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Centre, state to speed up key infra projects

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With delays in land acquisition and obtaining forest clearances being two major roadblocks in execution of key projects across sectors, the Centre and the state government have agreed to expedite them.

The Project Monitoring Group (PMG) of the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (CCI) today took stock of 40 projects in sectors like steel, power, coal, railways and roads.

"Today, the status of 40 projects in different sectors were reviewed. Issues like land acquisition and forest clearances came up during the meeting. Necessary instruc-

tions have been given to expedite them. For linear projects like roads, railways and pipelines, the forest diversion plans are supposed to be approved within the state. But the Union ministry of environment & forests (MoEF) is yet to constitute a regional committee for Odisha for the purpose. We have written to the ministry on the matter and will remind them again," said state chief secretary G C Pati.

Pati chaired the meeting held in the presence of V P Joy, joint secretary, Cabinet secretariat and other top officials of the state government.

The chief secretary called for proactive steps by field level officers of the departments of forest & environment and revenue & disaster management to expedite

grounding of projects.

The project proponents were asked to take possession of land already handed over to them to prevent encroachment. The proponents are also required to fulfill their commitments on R&R (rehabilitation & resettlement) and discharge their CSR (corporate social responsibility) obligations.

It was decided that the forest & environment department would identify 10,000 acres of degraded forest land. The land so identified would be used for the purpose of compensatory afforestation in lieu of forest diversion undertaken for railway, national highway and coal mine projects.

The PMG vetted the progress of steel projects proposed by Jindal Steel & Power

Ltd (JSPL), Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL), Visa Steel Ltd, Bhushan Steel Ltd, Essar Steel Ltd, SMC Power Generation and Visa Steel Ltd.

In the power sector, the ultra mega power project (UMPP) proposed at Bhedabahal near Sundargarh and coal-fired plants to be set up by Visa Power, Sahara India Power, Monnet Power, Lanco Babandh Power and KVK Nilachal Power came up for review.

Various open cast coal mining projects of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) and rail link projects including Jharsuguda-Barpalli-Sardega Railway line, Jharsuguda-Rengali doubling, Talcher-Bimlagarh new railway line, Angul-Sukhinda new line project were also discussed.