Full online approvals of large projects from March 2015: PMG

MUMBAI: To speed up implementation, the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) at the Cabinet Secretariat is looking at digitisation of approval processes.

"We are looking at digitisation of all approval processes and a lot of work has already been done. My hope is that by March 31, 2015, we should be able to enable industry to go to our portal and not go to any ministry and file all their registration and get clearances there itself," Anil Swarup, additional secretary with the Cabinet Committee on Investments who also who heads the PMG, told reporters here.

He said with the new process, the industry will also be able to track the application status.

The PMG, set up by the UPA government in June 2013, tracks stalled investment projects, both in public and private sectors and resolves implementation-related issues.

So far, the PMG has accepted 464 projects worth over Rs 22 trillion (Rs 22 lakh crore) for consideration and has facilitated around 169 projects worth Rs 6.24 trillion.

"There are nearly 210 projects, entailing an investment of Rs 11.5 trillion which are pending with us. We are engaging for them on a daily basis with the ministries," Swarup said.

He said the group recently facilitated clearances for laying rail lines for three mining projects in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, which will help address coal supply shortages.

"The country is not short of coal, the problem is evacuating that coal. We are looking into three critical railway projects which will go a long way in resolving many coal-related problems," he said, adding, these projects are expected to be completed by December 2016.

"Our current coal production is about 500 million tonnes and once these three coal mines start functioning, they will produce about 200 million tonnes per annum," he added. Asked about the impact of the Supreme Court decision to declare 218 coal blocks allocated between 1993 and 2010 as illegal, Swarup said it is not going to have a bearing on project clearances.

"There is no blow. The government is discussing it and a solution will be formed as the Supreme Court has not taken a stand on outright cancellation," Swarup said.