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The Project Monitoring Group (PMG) under Prime Minister's Office, in a recently held meeting with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), sought expeditious processing of pending projects, especially those that are stuck for want of

forest clearances at the state level.

Following this meeting, the ministry's forestry wing has written to principal secretaries and forest secretaries of all states, requesting them to issue "directions to all officials dealing with diversion of forest land cases to strictly process them all within the time limit prescribed by MoEFCC."

DNA has reviewed minutes of the meeting between PMG and MoEFCC and the directions sent to states.

According to the minutes of the meeting, it was observed that there were 118 cases pending for prior environmental clearance (EC) under the section, "under examination for terms of references". The ministry issues sector specific Terms of References (ToR), whose purpose is to enable the project proponents to prepare impact assessment studies and gather all the information required for the ministry to appraise the projects. Ministry officials told the PMG that these cases generally remain pending as there is no clarity on forthcoming meetings.

PROJECTS STATUS AT A GLANCE

Clearance	Status	Number of projects
For EC	Submitted by project proponent for ToR	118
Forest Clearance	Submitted by project proponent, under examination	396
Forest Clearance	Accepted by nodal officer such as divisional forest officer	701
Forest Clearance	Pending with conservator of forest	107

(EC: ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE; TOR: TERMS OF REFERENCE)

The PMG stressed there was a significantly large pendency in some districts and states, for cases related to diversion of forests. "It was therefore considered essential that an institutional mechanism be set up within the ministry to constantly monitor and review the pendency and remind all concerned officers to dispose the pending applications," the two government agencies decided.

Speaking on the meeting, a senior official from the PMG said, "The meeting was to identify the reasons for delays and find remedies for them. Since the online portals of ministries are getting integrated with PMG, there is a need to identify the bottlenecks. We found that several projects are stuck at the state level."