

Govt. to ease environment norms for road projects

New Delhi, February 02, 2013

Tribal affairs and environment ministry on Friday resolved their differences to clear hurdles for allowing road projects in forest areas without mandatory consent of gram sabha - the village body.

At a meeting anchored by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the two ministries agreed to change the 2009 guidelines issued under Forest Rights Act for quicker approval for road projects on the ground that it would benefit the tribal and forest dwellers by improving area's economic value.

Environment minister Jayanthi Natarajan and tribal affairs minister Kishore Chandra Deo had attended the meeting called by PM to resolve the forest right issues considered as biggest stumbling block for fastening highway growth in India.

Many of the National Highway Authority of India's road projects were struck because of delay in getting gram sabha approvals, which under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) is must for any project in forest area.

Now, the environment ministry would issue fresh guidelines exempting certain road projects from the provisions of the FRA.