

## Cabinet Committee on Investment faces clearance hurdles

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NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Investment (CCI) is seeing a fresh wave of ministerial dissension, an ironic twist in the functioning of a body that was set up in January this year with the express purpose of speedily clearing big-ticket investment projects.

After its birth was marred by ministerial dissension over its remit, the CCI appears to be faring no better in its infant months after two senior ministers have complained that a recent circular by the environment ministry has the effect of diluting the Forest Rights Act, a flagship legislation of the government.

The dissent was triggered by the February circular to delink forest clearances for linear projects such as roads, transmission lines and canals from village level or gram sabha consent, a move opposed by the ministers.

The matter was raised on March 20 at a CCI meeting where tribal affairs minister V [Kishore Chandra Deo](#) and road transport minister [CP Joshi](#) batted for mandatory gram sabha clearance for projects while environment minister [Jayanthi Natarajan](#) and telecom minister [Kapil Sibal](#) spoke in favour of expediting the projects.

The prime minister has asked [finance minister P Chidambaram](#) and ministers Deo, Joshi and Sibal—to find a way out to expedite clearances. The UPA cannot be seen as going against its own initiative, with parliamentary elections in 2014 and elections in tribal-dominated states such as [Chhattisgarh](#) and [Madhya Pradesh](#) within the next six months.