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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Directive to develop software for forest clearance proposals

Jan 19, 2022, 04.24 AM IST

Bhubaneswar: Chief secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra on Tuesday directed secretaries of various departments to make use of the latest provisions of forest laws for expeditious implementation of the critical infrastructure and development projects.

During a review meeting over videoconference, the chief secretary stressed on development of a full-proof online software through which the forest diversion proposals could be dealt right from the time of initiation to the final sanction and issue of the certificates.

The chief secretary also directed the forest and environment department to circulate a simplified guideline with frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers among the district and field level officers of both the forest and user departments for expediting approvals. The department was also asked to organize regular orientation programme of the forest and revenue officers and update them about latest position of the law regarding development of the critical socio-economic infrastructure.

Around 13 types of essential projects could be approved under the latest Forest Rights Act. These include construction of schools, dispensary, fair price shops, electric and telecommunication lines, tanks, drinking water projects, minor irrigation projects, canal, water harvesting structures, clean energy, skill training centre, roads, and community centres. Permission of the use of forest land to the extent of one hectare could be given by the DFOs, official sources said.

During the review, it was also stressed to identify appropriate land for compensatory afforestation in lieu of the diverted forest for maintaining ecological balance over the years.