

With land acquisition hurdles stalling about 350 infrastructure and industrial development projects in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government on Wednesday eased some cumbersome norms to speed up projects.

The state has waived the stipulation of paying 4 times the prevailing market value/circle rate, for acquiring 'gram sabha' land for development projects, under the existing land acquisition norms enforced in 2015.

The UP cabinet has decided to relax the provision for 'gram sabha' land owned by the state government and instead allowed for paying compensation as per the prevailing circle/market rates.

Briefing the media after the meet, UP health minister and government spokesperson Sidharth Nath Singh said the decision was taken to make the 'gram sabha' land available for development projects.

"The industry had been facing problems in executing projects owing to the existing norms of paying 4 times compensation. Besides, it was also deemed impractical and unviable. As such, the cabinet decided to revert to the land acquisition policy of prior to 2015 for 'gram sabha' land," he informed.

Besides, several other projects including Yogi's flagship project of Purvanchal Expressway had also witnessed delays in land acquisition. Several of the stalled projects pertained to the pharmaceutical and food processing sectors, which were proposed during the UP Investors Summit 2018 held on 21-22 February. The process of acquiring about 3,000 hectares of land for the proposed Bundelkhand Defence Corridor has also not begun.

In UP, total 'gram sabha' land runs into hundreds of thousands of hectares spread across more than 100,000 revenue villages. For acquiring such land, the concessionaire or the developer has to approach the respective district magistrate (DM), who then initiates the process after due diligence and necessary legal formalities.

However, the norms stand unchanged with regards to the private land. In March 2015, the then Akhilesh Yadav government had approved a policy for direct negotiation between the seller and buyer for land acquisition. It was primarily aimed at blunting any prospective charge of forced acquisition in the wake of Yadav's pet Agra-Lucknow Expressway project.

His government's new state policy had allowed for a simple agreement between the seller and the buyer for acquiring land, since Land Acquisition Act of 2013 had practical complexities, including cumbersome and time-consuming procedures. Under the new policy, the compensation in urban areas was capped at two times the market value/circle rate. In rural areas, the compensation was fixed at four times the prevailing market value/circle rate. Besides, land owners were entitled to payment towards the property, trees and standing crops on the acquired portion.

Meanwhile, the Adityanath cabinet has also allowed the government departments to appoint consultants for public private partnership (PPP) projects entailing investment of up to Rs 10 billion without the intervention of Pradeshia Industrial & Investment Corporation of UP Limited (PICUP).

