

## **Fourteenth Meeting of the Special Committee for Inter-Linking of Rivers held today**

### **Shri Nitin Gadkari calls upon states to cooperate with one another and with the centre to expedite projects for interlinking of rivers Also says rehabilitation of displaced persons must be fully ensured**

Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari has called upon state governments to cooperate with one another and with the centre to expedite the projects for interlinking of rivers. He was addressing the fourteenth meeting of the Special Committee for Inter-linking of Rivers in New Delhi today. Shri Gadkari stressed upon the need to design better technical models that aimed at bringing down construction cost while maintaining quality, so that projects do not languish for want of funds. He also called upon state governments to explore new financing models including low-interest loans from foreign agencies.

Shri Gadkari said that inter-linking of rivers will bring a big social economic change in the country, and usher in prosperity in many regions that are poorly developed today. He said if we are able to save the enormous amounts of river water that gets lost to the seas as run-off, and are able to divert this to water deficit regions, we can solve the problem of water scarcity that exists in several states today.

The Minister however added that while implementing the river interlinking projects the rehabilitation of displaced persons must be fully ensured. He said he is pained to see a large number of DPs still awaiting rehabilitation at various project sites which have been completed long back.

In order to resolve issues related to various projects Shri Gadkari said that clusters of states will be made and MoS Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal will soon visit states and hold meetings for on the spot discussion with the concerned state government on the various pending issues. Referring to the funding of various ILR projects Shri Gadkari said the time has come when we have look for innovative funding mechanisms for these projects. He urged state governments to come forward with definite funding proposals which can be taken up with foreign funding agencies. Shri Gadkari said his Ministry will provide all help to the states for this.

Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister of State for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Dharam Pal Singh, Irrigation Minister of UP, Shri T Harish Rao, Irrigation Minister of Telangana and Senior officials from the centre and state governments attended the meeting.

The meeting confirmed the minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Special Committee for Inter-linking of Rivers held on July 27, 2017 at New Delhi. It also reviewed the follow-up action on the decisions taken during the last meeting. The other issues taken up included the status of clearance of Ken-Betwa Link Project, Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada Link Projects. The meeting was informed that the clearances for Ken-Betwa Link Project have been given and MoU is likely to be signed soon. For the other two projects also all major issues have been resolved. Other topics that were discussed include Surplus Water in River Basin for Interlinking of Rivers, Status of Intra-State link proposals, Restructuring of National Water Development Agency, Constitution of Group of Financial Aspects under TFILR, Consideration of inter-linking of rivers (ILR) projects as National project and Alternative proposal of Diversion of Godavari water upto Cauvery basin (Phase-I).

Union Cabinet in its meeting held on July 24, 2014 had approved the constitution of the Special Committee on ILR. Accordingly, Special Committee on ILR was constituted vide order dated September 23, 2014. The first meeting of the committee was held on October 17, 2014. The committee, after considering the views of all the stakeholders, is proceeding ahead to expedite the objectives of the interlinking of rivers as per terms of reference. Vigorous efforts have been made for generating consensus with development of alternative plans and also setting out road maps for implementation of projects.

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