Ken-Betwa Project Gets Green Nod 27/12/2016

The news article of Hindu, DATED 27.12.2016, Bishwa Mohan
The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has given its much-awaited clearance, paving the way for work to begin for linking Ken and Betwa rivers, which will benefit six districts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in terms of meeting the irrigation, drinking water and electricity needs.

"Construction work will start after deciding its funding pattern," said Union water resources minister Uma Bharti.

Since the project requires diversion of forest land of Panna Tiger Reserve, it was required to be formally cleared by the board.

The clearance has finally come with certain conditions which include integration of nearby sanctuaries including Rani Durgavati and Ranipur with the Panna Tiger Reserve to compensate for the loss of tiger habitat and complete ban of fresh mining lease in the area. The board also wants the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to take care of the landscape plan for the area with the help of state forest department and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

Though the Rs 9,000 crore project had got the Union Cabinet’s clearance in July 2014, work could not begin as the mandatory clearance from NBWL got stuck amid objections from environmentalists and wildlife conservationists.

The Ken-Betwa ILR project will transfer surplus water from the Ken River to the Betwa basin through a 221 km canal. The concrete canal will pass through Jhansi, Banda and Mahoba districts of UP and Chhatarpur, Panna and Tikamgarh districts of MP.

The Ken-Betwa link is one of the 30 inter-linking of river (ILR) projects, conceived by the Centre. The project had got a green signal from the Supreme Court following the tripartite MoU involving UP, MP and the Centre. The apex court had in February 2012 directed the Centre (the then UPA-II Government) to implement
ILR in a time-bound manner and appointed a high-powered committee for its planning and implementation.

Though nearly 8,650 hectares of forest land - including part of Panna National Park -- in Madhya Pradesh will be submerged due to implementation of the KenBetwa project, the MoU had factored in the issues of larger benefit to the waterstarved region of both states.

The ILR plan has been in the pipeline since 1982 when the government set up the National Water Development Agency to carry out water balance and feasibility studies for river linking. It, however, got its first major push under then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during NDA rule (1999-2004) as a solution to many issues including floods, irrigation and hydro-power.