Linking of Rivers May Get 'National Projects' Tag

The News item appeared in “The Times of India” New Delhi edition dated 18.01.2018. The news item states that “All inter-linking of river (ILR) projects in the country may be declared as 'national projects' in a bid to expedite their implementation through quick flow of funds and better monitoring on the ground.

The issue was discussed at the meeting of special committee for river linking projects on Wednesday where the Union water resources minister Nitin Gadkari urged concerned states to come forward with definite funding proposals which can even be taken up with foreign funding agencies.

Besides discussing how to expedite ILR projects which are based on the premise of transferring surplus water to deficit zone through river linking, the participants also explored options of creating separate central fund for this purpose.

"We discussed framing criteria for considering ILR projects as 'national projects', especially in the backdrop of the ministry's decision to begin works on three identified river linking projects by resolving all differences among states this year", said an official.

Though the Ken-Betwa link has already been declared as a 'national project', the remaining ILR projects are yet to be clubbed in this category. The three projects which are ready for implementation are: Ken-Betwa link in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and Damanganga-Pinjal link and Par-Tapi-Narmada link in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

"The Ken-Betwa link project alone will require over Rs 18,000 crore. It would be difficult for UP and MP to go ahead with it under the existing 60 (Centre):40 (State) funding pattern as 90 (Centre):10 (State) pattern is yet to be finalised for this project", said the official.
The water resources ministry, however, on Wednesday said an MoU to implement the Ken-Betwa link project was likely to be signed soon.

Once the other ILR projects are declared as 'national projects', the states would be spared the funding obligation on major heads. The national project is eligible for 90% grant for the cost of work of irrigation and drinking water components of the project". 