

## Create a development body, link Kosi and Mechi rivers: HC to Centre, state

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"Regarding the funding, the Central government has suggested 60:30:10 formula that means 60 per cent Central grant, 30 per cent central loan and 10 per cent state share. The details have been placed on record in the Patna High Court. The court directed that this funding may be finalised," he said.

The Patna High Court has directed the Centre and Bihar government to set up Kosi Development Authority and interlink Kosi and Mechi rivers to tackle annual floods often caused due to excess water discharged from Nepal. The Bihar government has assessed the loss on count of floods since 2011 at Rs 12,766 crore.

The Kosi river has earned the sobriquet of "sorrow of Bihar".

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Responding to a PIL filed by a Gopalganj resident, Lal Babu Singh, a division bench of Patna High Court comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Karol (now elevated as a Supreme Court judge) and Justice Partha Sarthy in its order directed the authorities (the Centre): "Having due regard to the bilateral nature of the Kosi dam as also the extent of damages suffered by the state of Bihar ...the constitution of the Kosi Development Authority with all relevant officials as members so as to ensure that the authority so constituted has the required wherewithal and understanding to carry out various tasks required by the precarious task of balancing diplomacy on one end as also ensuring the safety, liberty and development of the people impacted by it."

Ordering interlinking of Kosi and Mechi rivers, the court said: "Keeping in view the continued loss and hardships faced by the people of the region, and in the spirit of protection of rights and interests of all... the interlinking of the two rivers, Kosi and Mechi, be done in a time-bound and expeditious manner, keeping in foremost view the principles of sustainable development."

Jha told The Indian Express: "The verdict can correct a historical folly". He said that the onus was now on Bihar government and the Centre in coordination with the Nepal government to address the flood management in a time-bound manner.

"The judgment is path-breaking, as it gives a direction and substance to the Indo-Nepal treaty on Kosi river...to ensure that Center-state and Indo-Nepal cooperation and joint effort come to the rescue of the people of Bihar," said Jha, while complimenting CM Nitish Kumar for his efforts to resolve the problem.

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