

# ₹45,000-cr. Ken-Betwa link project launched

Modi lays the foundation stone for the river-linking project aimed at solving the water woes of the Bundelkhand region, spread across parts of the States of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh

**Mehul Malpani**  
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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the Ken-Betwa river-linking project in Madhya Pradesh's Khajuraho, aimed at solving the water woes of the Bundelkhand region, spread across parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The project is estimated to cost around ₹45,000 crore.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Modi credited Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision for India's major river valley projects, and accused the Congress of not giving due recognition to the architect of the Constitution.

"The major river valley projects of India were based on the vision of Ba-



Narendra Modi examines a project map during the event to lay the foundation stone for the river-linking project in Khajuraho. ANI

basahab Ambedkar. The Central Water Commission exists today because of the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar but the Congress never gave him credit for his water-conservation efforts. No one was even allowed to know about it," he said, amid the ongoing controversy over Union Home Mi-

nister Amit Shah's remarks on Dr. Ambedkar. The Congress had staged protests seeking Mr. Shah's resignation over the issue.

"Who thought of a visionary water-conservation plan? The truth was suppressed. The true servant was forgotten so that credit could go to one per-

son. I tell you that after the country got Independence, the credit for the farsightedness behind India's water management and construction of dams goes to Babasaheb Ambedkar," he said.

Mr. Modi said that the Congress governments of the past were "experts in making announcements" but did not have the "intention to implement the schemes".

He said the Ken-Betwa project would bring prosperity to the drought-prone Bundelkhand region. "The people of Bundelkhand struggled for every drop of water but the previous governments did not find any permanent solution to the water crisis."

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"Even after seven decades of Independence, disputes over river water between States continued but no concrete efforts were made to resolve them," Mr. Modi said.

"When Atal [Bihari Vajpayee] ji's government was formed, he came up with a permanent solution through the river-linking initiative and even started the work but it was discontinued after 2004. Today, Atal ji's dream is about to be realised," he added.

The Ken-Betwa river linking project is expected to address drinking and irrigation water needs of at least 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh and various districts of Uttar Pradesh. The project is also aimed at generating more than 100 MW of hydro-power and 27 MW of solar energy.

The Prime Minister also laid foundation for the Daudhan dam irrigation project, which is expected to address irrigation needs of 11 lakh hectares of land in the region.

Mr. Modi said that Madhya Pradesh has become the first State in the country with two river-linking projects under way at the moment. Recently, he had also launched the Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal river-linking project that spreads between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Apart from the Ken-Betwa project, the Prime Minister also virtually inaugurated a floating solar energy project in Madhya Pradesh's Omkareshwar, the State's first solar power plant.

He also laid the foundation stone for the construction of 1,153 Atal Gram Seva Sadans and released a commemorative stamp and coin in the honour of former Prime Minister Vajpayee, on the occasion of his birth centenary.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil, Union Minister and former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, State BJP chief and Khajuraho MP V.D. Sharma and other leaders were present at the ceremony.

Speaking about concerns that the river-linking project may cause harm to the animals at the Panna Tiger Reserve, Mr. Modi said the animals at the reserve will be kept in mind while building the canal for the project.

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