

## PM Modi pitches for river linking project to end water woes of Bundelkhand, UP and MP

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday pitched for implementation of a long pending Ken-Betwa rivers interlinking project to end water woes of the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, saying efforts were on to make this a reality by bringing both states on board.

He also spoke about sanction of 500 water-related projects worth Rs 10,000 crore for the Bundelkhand region and mentioned about his government's attempt to introduce "agriculture and its practical application" as a subject at middle-school level in villages through the new education policy.



"The Ken-Betwa project has huge potential to change the fate of this region. We have been working in this direction and been in constant touch with both the state governments. I am confident that the lives will be completely changed here once Bundelkhand gets adequate water," said Modi. He was speaking after inaugurating the new academic and administrative building of Rani Lakshmi Bai Central Agricultural University, Jhansi through video conference. The University was established in 2014.

On the new concept of introducing agriculture education at middle-school level in villages, Modi said, "It would be beneficial in two ways. It would help school children in villages, who have natural understanding of farming, to expand their knowledge scientifically. Secondly, they would be able to make their family members aware of new Agri techniques and farm-related enterprises."

The Ken-Betwa project, which aims to provide irrigation facilities to over 15 lakh hectares of farm land and drinking water to about 63 lakh population in both the states, has been pending due to differences between UP and MP governments over water sharing agreement.

The project has already got techno-economic and various statutory clearances for its phase-I, except final (stage-II) 'forest clearance' and clearance from central empowered committee of the Supreme Court.

The Ken-Betwa project is the first one among 30 proposed interlinking of rivers (ILR) projects which has been taken up for implementation. Though the ILR projects for transferring water from water-surplus river basins to water-deficit basins were mooted way back in 1980, it was actively taken up by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2002. It, however, fell off the priority list once the UPA-I came to power in 2004.

Modi also spoke on use of modern technology in meeting agriculture related challenges and cited an example how India could successfully control the major threat of locust attacks this season with timely deployment of drones, helicopter and sophisticated spray equipment in affected states.

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