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Plans to draw water for Marathwada from ujjani dam hinges on NABARD support

It was way back in 2004 when the population from drought prone areas of Osmanabad and Beed districts of Marathwada first saw a possible solution to their water woes when plans were sanctioned to draw water from Ujjani dam in Solapur.

The ambitious project, which continues to spark mixed reactions since its inception, faced alleged official apathy as well as inevitable delays, resulting into almost two-fold rise in the project cost.

To tide over the funding issue associated with the delay in execution of the project, the state government has been exploring the option of seeking financial assistance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

“The initial cost of Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project was Rs 4,932 crore in 2004. The revised financial outlay of the project is nearing Rs 8,000 crore,” a senior official from the State Water Resources Department (WRD) said, adding that funds worth Rs 2229.56 crore have been sought from NABARD.

He said that the WRD has submitted a proposal to the State government for obtaining Rs 2229.56 crore from NABARD during September last year. “If all goes as per plans, the project could progress at desired pace in near future if desired financial boos is received,” WRD authorities said.

The Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project involves Krishna-Marathwada irrigation project and three lift irrigation schemes, including two in Osmanabad and one in Beed. The capacity of much-delayed project, has been reduced to only 7 TMC initially during the first phase as per the ruling by the Krishna Water Disputes Award Tribunal (KWDT) while deciding the issue of diversion of water from one river basin to another.

राष्ट्रीय कृषि और ग्रामीण विकास बैंक

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

कापारट सचार वभाग

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Corporate Communications Department

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In a first phase, around 288 villages from Osmanabad and Beed districts will be free from the water scarcity if the multi-crore irrigation project, scheduled to fetch seven TMC water becomes reality. Also, it is expected to irrigate nearly 33,945 hectare of agricultural land from total three districts during first phase.

When asked about the progress of project so far, authorities said, "As a part of Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project, the construction of Somanthali barrage on Nira River, a tributary of Bhima River is almost 95% complete, while such work related to Udhat barrage is on progress. The work of laying down nearly 24.5 kilometer-long tunnel between Nira and Bhima rivers is also progressing a fast pace."

As regards to Krishna-Bhima irrigation project, the work of laying down Jeur tunnel to channelize water from Ujjani dam upto the boundaries of Osmanabad district as a part of the lift irrigation scheme I is also on the progress. The work of four storage tanks as a part of the scheme has been accomplished whereas those of three others is in progress, authorities said.

Under lift irrigation scheme II, the work of Ghatane barrage is over, while that of Naldurga I and Naldurga II is in progress. The work of construction of two out of four storage tanks has been over, while that of remaining two is on the progress.

"The project of drawing water from Ujjani dam for parts of Marathwada received a push post the special cabinet meeting held at Aurangabad during October 2016. Funds worth over Rs 550 crore could get arranged after the special cabinet meeting, giving impetus to the different groundwork," WRD official said.

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Declining to specify any particular timeframe by which the Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project would be over, authorities said the progress of the work depends solely on the fund-flow.

Shankar Nagare, expert member (Irrigation) of Marathwada Development Board, said the works under Krishna-Bhima irrigation project must be expedited to end water woes of Beed and Osmanabad districts. "We demand that total at least 23 TMC water must be released from the Basin of Krishna River towards Marathwada instead of 7 TMC as per the principle of equitable distribution. To this effect, we have already knocked the doors of the Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority (MWRRA)," said Nagare, former executive director of Godavari Marathwada Irrigation Development Corporation (GMIDC).

Addressing an election rally at Baramati in Pune district, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "We will request the Centre to own the Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project taking it away from the purview of the state government."

"The project is going to benefit parts of Western Maharashtra also. Once our party candidate becomes an MP from Baramati, we will ensure necessary follow up with the Centre through her," he said, while campaigning for Kanchan Kool, a BJP candidate from Baramati Lok Sabha constituency.

Fadnavis alleged that only Rs 20 crore were spent on such an important project during Congress- NCP rule. "The project got a necessary revival our rule and we will complete it soon," he said.

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