

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION
RAJYA SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1215

ANSWERED ON 10.03.2025

OBJECTIONS TO THE LINKING OF KEN-BETWA RIVERS

1215. SHRI A. D. SINGH

Will the Minister of **JAL SHAKTI** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether experts including members of Supreme Court appointed Committee have raised objections to the linking of Ken-Betwa rivers;
- (b) if so, what are their objections to the project;
- (c) whether Government has taken steps to address their concerns;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI

(SHRI RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY)

(a) to (e) A Central Empowered Committee (CEC) was constituted by the Supreme Court to examine the wildlife clearance for the Ken-Betwa Link Project, in terms of adequacy of mitigative measures against the adverse impact of the project on the ecological integrity of Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR) and the riverine ecosystem.

The CEC submitted its Report to the Supreme Court in August, 2019. While no objection to the linking of the rivers Ken and Betwa has been raised by the CEC, they have, inter alia, recommended studies for examining whether the mitigative measures proposed effectively offset the adverse impacts of the Ken-Betwa Link Project on the unique ecosystem of Panna National Park and Panna Tiger Reserve. In this regard, detailed studies on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) have been carried out for the project and requisite mitigative measures examined and analysed thoroughly by the Expert Advisory Committee (EAC) of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and National Board of Wild Life (NBWL), while communicating the Environmental and Wildlife clearances to the project. Further, as directed by NBWL, an Integrated Landscape Management Plan (ILMP) has been prepared by Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun under the supervision of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR), MoEF&CC, and the Forest Departments of the States of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP). The ILMP aims to provide better habitat, protection and management of flagship species (tiger, vultures and gharial) and biodiversity conservation covering not only the PTR region, but also the surrounding areas in both the States. A Greater Panna Landscape Council (GPLC) under the Chief Secretary,

Government of Madhya Pradesh has been constituted in February, 2023, for the systematic implementation of ILMP in a time bound manner. One meeting of the GPLC and two meetings of a Sub-Committee constituted under the GPLC have been held so far.

Further, the CEC has also recommended for examination of various alternatives to meet the objectives of the Ken-Betwa Link Project, to meet the irrigation needs of the command area of the project to alleviate poverty, through specialized agencies having expertise in areas including arid zone agriculture, soil and water conservation. This was deliberated by the Special Committee on Interlinking of Rivers (SCILR), the apex body for taking decisions on various issues related to ILR, during its 17th meeting held on 26.02.2020. As observed by the Special Committee, while preparing the Detailed Project Report of the project, all available alternatives / options have been examined and the Ken-Betwa Link Project is the only option available to meet the irrigation needs of the command area, which will provide the much needed relief to the drought prone Bundelkhand region.
