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CM's order to expedite river-interlinking work

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Sept. 27. — Chief minister Mr Naveen Patnaik today directed the engineers and officials of Water Resources department to expeditiously complete the survey and investigation on the proposed Vansadhara-Rushikulya river linking project and submit the proposals to the Central Water Commission.

The direction was issued at a high level meeting, chaired by the chief minister here today, to review the progress of all the ongoing major and medium irrigation projects.

It was also decided that a new irrigation division would be created for undertaking the river linking project. A survey and investigation sub-division has already been opened and the survey work is underway, minister of state for water resources Mr Rabi Narayan Nanda told reporters after the meeting.

The Rs 870.26 crore project is expected to provide irrigation to Rayagada, Gajapati and Ganjam districts and supply the surplus water to the Rushikulya river.

The feasibility report for the project has already been submitted to the Central Water Commission.

The idea of linking the rivers is believed to be in response to the "unilateral move" of Andhra Pradesh to construct canals and reservoir on the inter-state Vansadhara river, violating the inter-state river water sharing agreement.

Progress of 36 ongoing major and medium irrigation projects including six major, 11 medium, seven creek and four flood control projects involving a total cost of Rs 5400.06 crore was reviewed at today's meeting.

It was revealed from the review that a sum of Rs 1835.16 crore had been spent in these projects, creating irrigation facilities for 39.73 thousand hectare out of targeted 310.54 thousand hectare. Chief minister asked the departmental engineers and officials to

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prepare a road map for completing all the ongoing and new irrigation projects within a specific time frame, Mr Nanda said. Mr Patnaik also instructed them to expedite the land acquisition and finalisation of rehabilitation work relating to the Lower Indra, Lower Suktel, Ret, Ong and Chheligarh projects and directed the forest officials to sort out the forest-related problems relating to the Brutanga irrigation project.

It was also decided that the Rengali right bank canal and Indravati extension project should be commissioned in the coming year.

The inter-state Subarnarekha irrigation project – a joint venture involving Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand– also came under review. Out of a total project cost of Rs 2408.52 crore, Rs 577.91 crore have already been spent. The progress was slow and work had virtually stopped for 2003-04 period due to the inter-state dispute.

Meanwhile, the work has been resumed in Jharkhand from 2003-04 and necessary funds have been provided by the Orissa government. Minister of state, Mr Nanda said that he would visit Jharkhand soon to review the progress of the project.

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