

TRIBES OPPOSE NARMADA LINK PROJECT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Activists of Save Narmada Movement during a protest in New Delhi. File Photo

More than 5,000 tribal people in Gujarat gathered in Gandhinagar on Friday to oppose the proposed Par-Tapi-Narmada river link project, which the local communities fear will displace residents of the region in south Gujarat.

Thousands of them had gathered to register their strong protest in Dangs on March 18. So far, the local residents have held half a dozen rallies and protests objecting to the project which, they claim, would destroy their livelihood in Valsad, Dangs and Navsari districts.

Proposed by the Centre, the project is meant to transfer water from the surplus regions of the Western Ghats to the deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch through the Sardar Sarovar Project. Water is proposed to be taken from seven reservoirs through a 395-km canal. Of the seven reservoirs, six are located in Valsad and Dang districts and one in Maharashtra.

The controversial project seeks to link the Par, which originates at Nashik in Maharashtra and flows through Valsad, the Tapi from Saputara that flows through Maharashtra and Surat and the Narmada originating in Madhya Pradesh and flowing through Maharashtra and Bharuch, Narmada and Vadodara districts in Gujarat.

As per the detailed project report prepared by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA), about 6,065 hectares will be submerged due to the proposed seven reservoirs to be built in Maharashtra and Gujarat. While 60 villages will be affected partly, one will be fully submerged.

The number of affected families would be around 2,509.

The Opposition Congress has supported the agitation. "At no cost we will allow the project to materialise," said Congress MLA Anant Patel, a leading tribal leader in South Gujarat.

Worried about the spiralling protests by the tribals ahead of the Assembly polls, the State government has maintained that there is no move at all to start work on the project.

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