

CABINET CLEARS RS. 3,466 CRORE DAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Relevant for: World & Indian Geography | Topic: Distribution of key natural resources - Water Resources incl. Rivers & related issues in world & India

The Hirakud dam in Sambalpur district of Odisha.PTIPTI

The government has approved a 65% hike, and extended by two years, a project to improve the stability and working of dams in 11 States.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Dam Rehabilitation Improvement Project (DRIP) project on Wednesday. Out of the Rs. 3,466 crore cleared, Rs. 2,628 crore would be funded by the World Bank and Rs. 747 crore by the States and Implementing Agencies (IAs), and the balance Rs. 91 crore by the Central Water Commission (CWC).

Originally, the total cost of DRIP was Rs. 2,100 crore with the States expected to fund Rs. 1,968 crore and the Centre Rs. 132 crore. Initially, the six-year project commenced on April 18, 2012, with a scheduled closing on June 30, 2018.

This has now been extended to June 2020. A dam safety Bill that sets directives on how the States and the Centre ought to have an institutional mechanism to better manage dams is still to be discussed in Parliament.

“The (DRIP) project will improve the safety and operational performance of selected existing dams and mitigate risks to ensure safety of downstream population and property. The primary beneficiaries are both urban and rural communities dependent on reservoir and downstream communities, who are prone to risk associated with dam failure or operational failure” said a press statement accompanying the decision.

Six monthly reviews

There are 198 existing dams in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Jharkhand (Damodar Valley Corporation) and Uttarakhand (Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited) that would benefit from the project. In lieu of the funds, dam managers would have to adhere to recommendations by the CWC as well as subject themselves to six monthly reviews by the World Bank and an audit by an independent French agency, said an official in the Union Water Ministry, who did not wish to be identified.

Kerala, which saw devastating floods and questions raised on the management of its dams, will see 16 of the reservoirs managed by its Water Resources Department and 12 by that State's Electricity Department, get funded under the DRIP programme to the tune of Rs. 514 crore.

“This money was locked in and sent for approval before the floods. Moreover, the Mullaperiyar dam — located in Kerala and owned by Tamil Nadu — isn't one of those to be rehabilitated,” the official quoted above added.

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