

# Pakistan aims for water treaty with Afghanistan

| Wants to prevent any future dispute with the western neighbour

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is about to start talks with Afghanistan to secure a bilateral treaty for the use of water related to Kabul River.

Well-placed sources told The Nation that efforts are underway to frame a draft to take up with Kabul to secure the treaty at the earliest.

The move apparently comes after recent statements by Indian leaders that New Delhi wants to gift a water reservoir to Kabul over the river as a token of friendship with Afghanistan.

The sources maintained that Pakistan wants to secure the bilateral treaty to prevent any future water dispute with the brotherly western neighbour, and in order to address Afghanistan's concern over Pakistan's using water of Kabul River without any formal accord.

The draft of the treaty also includes the use of Pakistani waters from Chitral and adjoining areas which eventually make Kunar-Chitral River as one of major water distributaries of the Kabul River.

According to the sources, Pakistan believes that Afghanistan was using some of its waters from Chitral and its adjoining areas that end up into Kunar-Chitral River which was the main source of water in the Kabul River.

According to the sources, the PTI government in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was of the view that Afghanistan was also using waters from Swat River. However, it could not be confirmed immediately from the PTI spokesperson.

Pakistan established Warsak Hydroelectric Power Project about 20 kilometres in the North West of Peshawar city over the Kabul River in 1960 under the Colombo Plan financed by the Canadian government.

It was completed in two phases. The first phase was completed in 1960 at a cost of Rs394.98 million, consisting of construction of the dam, irrigation tunnels, civil works, four generating units with a capacity of 40 MW each and 132 KV transmission system.

In the second phase, two additional generating units each of 41.48 MW were added in 1980-81 at a cost of Rs 106.25 million.

In general, the project consists of a mass concrete gravity dam with integral spillway, a power tunnel, a power station, a concrete lined 10 feet diameter irrigation on the right bank and a three feet diameter steel pipe irrigation conduit on the left bank of the reservoir.

The 250 feet high and 460 feet long dam with a reservoir of four square miles as a live storage capacity of 25,300-acre feet of water irrigates 119,000 acres of land and meeting power generation requirement. A spillway with nine gates is capable of discharging 540,000 cusecs of the floodwater.

Most of the seven rivers that Pakistan and Afghanistan share rise in Afghanistan. River Kabul – which later joins the Indus River – is one of the most developed rivers and a potential source of hydropower for both countries. Some 23 percent of the Afghan population, more than 7 million people, lives in the Kabul basin. On the Pakistani side of the basin, the river is a vital source of irrigation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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