

## Karnataka Budget

# Drought Budget: Schemes for water woes, but are Karnataka's 'vote bank solutions' temporary?

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In the run up to the 2018 Assembly Election, the Karnataka budget allocates Rs 3,000 crore for new developmental projects.

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PTI



The Karnataka Assembly elections are a year away, and with that in mind the Siddaramaiah government announced a range of new schemes worth Rs 3,000 crore on Wednesday.

With the state reeling under a severe drought, the 2017-18 budget has several new schemes to address the water crisis.

### **Irrigation**

A new lift irrigation scheme will be implemented in Muddebihal taluk of Vijayapura, rejuvenation of works in Kalburgi, Ghattaraga, Choladahedagi-



The Sannati lift irrigation project, which was proposed ten years ago, is still not complete. The project aimed at installation of barrages in Chitrapur and Yadgir. Although the state has faced severe drought in the last two years, the project had been put on hold during that period due to shortage of funds. The Sannati project has featured in several previous budgets, including the 2016 one but no progress has been witnessed yet. The new budget proposes filling up of 35 tanks in Yadgir through this scheme.

“The Almatti dam, the state’s largest reservoir has hit dead storage level. Keeping in mind the drinking water needs and to prevent such instances in the future, modernisation of Almatti left bank canal will be taken up,” Siddaramaiah announced.

The Chulkinala reservoir is made up of barrages and is located in Bidar district. The dried-up reservoir has caused severe crop failure as it was meant for medium irrigation purposes. The budget proposes lifting of water from Kongali barrage of Basavaraya taluk to fill up the reservoir.

A project for stabilization of catchment area is also on the cards where water from Manikeshwara and Halahalli barrages will be diverted to Karanja Reservoir to improve the dam’s inflow.

### **Drinking water**

As the water crisis has already hit the state, the new budget proposes various schemes to fill up tanks by either drawing water from barrages or the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers. CM Siddaramaiah announced 10 schemes to fill up water tanks across the state in Belagavi, Haveri, Hirekerur, Gadag and Dharwad areas.

With reservoirs drying up, the government has realised that most of the dams are not built to handle water being drawn from dead storage.

The budget also proposes modernisation of various reservoirs including

≡ | **The NEWS Minute** Mullamari Upper Bank Projects of Kalaburagi District, reconstruction of Sri Ramadeva Dam in Holenarasipura taluk, construction of 374 km canals in Cauvery basin at an estimated cost of Rs 509.55 crore, modernization of Harangi Left Bank chain from 27.083 km to 149.38 km, modernization of Kanva canals, Markonahalli left and right bank canal and Harohalli high level canal. ×

### **But will these proposed schemes bring relief to Karnataka's water woes or is it an eyewash?**

“The tanks can be filled up with water but that is only a temporary solution. Soon, the water that is filled up will also deplete. What is more important is rejuvenating tanks and planting trees. That is a long-term plan. But the politicians are only concerned about getting votes and looting resources. They could have allotted money to make these areas sustainable,” said TV Ramachandra, Professor, Centre for Energy and Wetlands, IISc.

The budget also allocates Rs 30 crore for cloud seeding in case the pre-monsoon and monsoons fail. Cloud seeding is an induced weather condition where chemicals like silver iodide and potassium iodide are sprinkled on clouds to produce rain.

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