

Water project won't get stuck in the pipeline

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BANGALORE: If the Airport Road flyover project in Bangalore is any reminder, infrastructure projects have seen many a bitter experience with contractors' tussle throwing project deadlines and goals to the wind. But the Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation (KUIDFC) has framed a carrot-and-stick contract for its latest project with private-sector participation.

Contracts have been awarded and work is underway for two of the three major components of the ambitious Karnataka Urban Water Sector Improvement Project (KUWASIP), taken up on a pilot basis in five zones in four north-Karntaka cities - Hubli, Dharwad, Belgaum and Gulbarga.

"We have awarded contracts for two tasks - cutting of transmission losses in water supply and the operator contract for continuous water supply in

these zones. Both will be completed in a year. Initially, it will be implemented in five pilot zones, but parallel work is on to extend it," said KUIDFC Assistant General Manager (Urban Water Supply) Raghavendra Purohit.

The operator contract has been bagged by a French company - Compagnie Generale Deseaux - which gets just 60 per cent of its implementation cost at first. After that, payment aims at pinning down performance - that is, the company gets paid only if it meets time-bound commitments. There are penalties for every day of default or non-performance. And cumulative non-performance gets the contract terminated.

"We can't hold on to non-performance. But there are also parameters on which he can get incentives - if he far exceeds performance levels in certain goals, he gets paid over and above the implementation cost, as a kind of bonus. No water project in

the country has such a public-private partnership model," Mr Purohit told Deccan Herald.

Regular water supply

The World Bank-funded Rs 237 crore project aims at continuous water supply in the demonstration zones in the cities. It's a shift from other 24/7 water supply projects in that there is no need for consumers to store water under KUWASIP.

"Water will be flowing from source to supply points at all time. This is different from traditional water supply, where supply is intermittent and consumers have to store water in overhead tanks whenever water is supplied, use it till it lasts, throw it when fresh water is supplied. Under KUWASIP, water won't be sent at regular intervals - it will be supplied all the time in these drought-prone cities," said Mr Purohit. "The logic in continuous water supply is to end woes of storage and related wastage" he explained.

MCA seats at St Aloysius