

# UP forms new body for upkeep, safety of dams

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Lucknow: The state government has established a new body, State Dam Safety Organisation, which will carry out periodic maintenance and ensure safety of 139 dams across Uttar Pradesh.

Of the total 139 dams, 71 were constructed more than 50 years ago.

Till now, it was the irrigation department which used to carry out maintenance and repair works through superintendent engineers.

The network of dams has been broadly divided into three divisions – Rohilkhand, comprising eastern Ganga and Sharda river channels and tributaries, Vindhyaachal which covers Son and Saryu channels, and Bundelkhand, comprising Betwa and its tributaries.

While the civil division of the irrigation department is responsible for strengthening embankment and desilting of streams near the structure of the dam, the mechanical division of the department is responsible for ensuring smooth functioning of the stop gates and hydraulics.

At least 18 assistant and junior engineers will be deputed as key officers under eight divisional executive engineers. The final responsibility to ensure the safety of dams will be on three superintendent engineers.

Director of the central design directorate of the department, VK Mishra, said: "Till now, departmental orders were issued before the monsoon for safety of dams and barrages. However, the government order will now be binding for the members of the organisation. The hierarchy, tasks, responsibility and accountability has been defined for the first time."

The organisation has been constituted as per the directives of the Union ministry of Jal Shakti which has set up a National Dam Safety Authority and asked the state government to take similar measures.

In Uttar Pradesh, three dams –Rihand Dam on Rihand river in Sonbhadra (1962), Matatila Dam on Betwa river in Jhansi (1964), and Rajghat on Betwa in Lalitpur (2005) – have been classified as dams of national importance.

Officials said 70 dams in the state were more than 15 metres high and have extremely large reservoirs. "The ones built in the past are structurally strong. Regular maintenance is required for the dams that were established after 1971. Also, the dams of national importance have the height of over 100 metre and storage capacity of 1 billion cubic metre or above," said an irrigation department officer.