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# Tulbul Navigation Project Explained

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## What Is the Tulbul Navigation Project?

The **Tulbul Navigation Project** is a navigation lock-cum-control structure proposed at the outlet of Wular Lake on the Jhelum River in north Jammu and Kashmir.

Its purpose is to regulate water flow so that the river maintains enough depth for year-round navigation (boat movement), especially during dry winter months.

The barrage was also expected to help in flood control, sediment management and downstream power generation.

## History of the Project

The idea was first conceived in the early 1980s, and work began in 1984.

However, construction was suspended in 1987/1988 after continued objections from Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) partner Pakistan that the structure could violate the treaty.

Because of this, the project remained stalled for nearly four decades.

## What the Project Would Do

It would control outflow from Wular Lake to ensure the Jhelum River has sufficient depth throughout the year for boats.

This can promote river transport and tourism, improve hydroelectric power production downstream, and assist water management in the Kashmir Valley.

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Regulated water release could also help reduce sediment build-up and improve overall river health.

### Why It Was Stalled

Pakistan argued that building such a structure may violate the IWT, which regulates how India and Pakistan share the waters of the Indus river system.

Islamabad believed the Tulbul structure could act like a storage facility and affect downstream water flows, which are largely allocated to Pakistan under the treaty.

India, however, contended that the project involved non-consumptive use like navigation, which is permitted under the IWT, and that Pakistan could not show real harm from the project.

### Recent Developments

Following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty by India in April 2025 after the Pahalgam terror attack, the government of Jamm& Kashmir has renewed efforts to revive the Tulbul project.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has stated that his government is working with the Centre to restart the project after decades of delay.

He says the treaty's abeyance opens the opportunity to move forward, with the aim of benefiting the region's navigation, hydropower, and water management needs.

### How It Relates to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 divides the rivers of the Indus basin between India and Pakistan. **India controls the eastern rivers (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej)** and **Pakistan controls the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab)**, with limited rights for India on the western rivers for non-consumptive usage. India has often maintained that the Tulbul project fits within those rights, but Pakistan's objections stalled progress for years. The recent suspension of the treaty has changed the diplomatic context.

### Why the Tulbul Project Matters

Revival of the project could unlock river navigation in J&K, introduce boat transport and tourism, and support local economic growth.

It could improve downstream hydropower generation and enhance water management in the Jhelum basin.

The project has symbolic importance as a long-awaited regional development effort that has been constrained by international water politics.