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Rivers to be privatized as a solution to water crisis

The government has found a new solution for the water crisis that emerged due to global warming, insufficient rain and the delayed construction of dams. The right to operate the rivers and lakes will be sold to private sector for a period of 49 years.



The government will sell the right to operate the rivers with a project to be implemented for the first time in Turkey to solve water crisis that emerged as a result of global warming, insufficient rain and the delayed construction of dams.

The rivers will be open to the private sector with build-operate-transfer model (YİD) for the irrigation of the regions that will be designated within the framework of the project, said Hilmi Güler, the minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

The government is planning on selling the rights to operate rivers as a part of a new policy designed to solve the water crisis. Speculations have been made that the crisis has emerged as a result of global warming, insufficient rain, and the delayed construction of dams.

Rights to operating rivers will be open to the private sector with a build-operate-transfer model (YİD) for the irrigation of regions designated by the project, said Hilmi Güler, the minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

In a statement to Milliyet, Güler explained the government's plan consists of four projects to solve the irrigation problem in collaboration with the private sector. The project plans to transfer the right to operate rivers and small lakes to the private sector for a period of 49 years.

Drinking water also on the agenda:

According to the draft project, Turkey's basins will be divided into zones according to respective irrigation needs. The necessary irrigation dams will be built by the private sector. The rivers and small lakes will be transferred to the private sector for 49 years under the YİD model. The projects' next step will be the usage of irrigation water for drinking water.

Investors interested in undertaking the work will be determined through a competition, like the nuclear power plant project, not by bidding. An agreement will be signed with the investor who can complete the dam in the shortest time possible at the cheapest rate. The competition will also be open for foreign investors.

The flowing water to be stored:

With the project, the fresh water resources that cannot be utilized properly by the government will be stored in dams and used for irrigation purposes. State will own irrigation dam without allocating funds from the national budget.

The investors will be able to cover the investment costs by selling the water obtained from the dam and make profit.

Kızılırmak to be privatized:

Kızılırmak River is on the agenda for privatization, said Energy Ministry Güler. The agricultural areas encompassed within the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) are also among important irrigation areas, he said, adding that a solution to drought in the region will be found with the transfer of water resources.

12 -13 rivers to be sold:

Yalçın Bayer in his column on July 7 gave place to government's project related to the sale of the rivers. Some 12-13 rivers are included in the sale and approximately a \$3.1 billion profit is expected. The statement states: "The water flowing to Atatürk and Keban dams on the Euphrates will be included in this privatization. According to the preliminary works by the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI), a 29-year sale price of Euphrates is \$950 million while that of the Tigris is \$650 million."

'Public good' the only Constitutional criterion

The government's new project has raised questions of whether the transfer of water resources to the private sector requires a constitutional amendment. Placing coastlines under the state's judgment and disposition, article 43 of the Constitutional law reads: "The public good is the primary consideration in respect to benefiting from the shores of seas, lakes and rivers, and the coast line surrounding seas and lakes. In accordance with the law, any usage of shores and coastlines must take into consideration the opportunities and conditions of the public to benefit from such places.

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