

**Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers held on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 at New Delhi.**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) was held under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 at 15.00 hrs. in the Committee Room No:523(N), Central Water Commission, R.K. Puram, New Delhi.

The list of participants of the meeting is given at Annexure-1.

After completing formal introductions, the Secretary, MoWR welcomed the distinguished Members of the Committee, Special Invitees and other Participants of the meeting. In his welcome speech, he mentioned about the purpose of setting up of the Committee and the active role the Hon'ble Members of the Committee has to play for making the process of proceeding on Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) Programme consultative and the concern of the Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources on the issue regarding bringing transparencies in the consultative process. He informed the Members about the recent developments that had taken place after the first meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2005, namely on:

- (i) The direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to put up the Feasibility Reports (FRs) of the Inter Basin Water Transfer (IBWT) proposals prepared by National Water Development Agency (NWDA) on the website, without referring to any authority. Accordingly the FRs of the 13 links under the Peninsular Component (PC) of National Perspective Plan (NPP) along with views of the concerned States have already been placed on the website: <http://www.nwda.gov.in>.
- (ii) Signing of the Tripartite Agreement by the Hon'ble Chief Ministers of M.P. & U.P. and Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources in the presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 for preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Ken-Betwa link project.

While referring the above developments, the Secretary, MoWR informed about the reason for not putting the FRs of Himalayan Component (HC) links on the website, even though surveys on Indian Portion of some of them are completed by NWDA. Some of the rivers coming under HC are international rivers and hence, it is premature to put them in the public domain without addressing the international dimensions involved in the proposals and we would like to bring these facts to the kind notice of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. He also mentioned about the efforts that are being made by the MoWR to arrive at a consensus amongst the concerned States on the other priority links, such as Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal link involving M.P., Rajasthan & U.P., Par-Tapi-Narmada and Damanganga-Pinjal links involving Maharashtra & Gujarat and Godavari (Polavaram)-Krishna (Vijayawada) link involving Orissa, Chhattisgarh, M.P., A.P., Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala & Pondicherry.

While concluding the welcome speech, the Secretary, MoWR stressed the importance for preparation of DPR for river link projects and to go ahead with the work of preparation of DPRs, which would now be started with Ken-Betwa link project. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for DPRs needs to be finalised, considering the views/observations of the Members of the Committee. Even though, we received the views/observations from some of the Members of the Committee, we wish to receive more valuable views on the DPR preparation for incorporating modalities for an effective consultative process for proceeding ahead on the ILR programme. Who is going to prepare the first DPR for Ken-Betwa link project is not yet finalized. An initial decision was taken regarding preparation of the DPR by Central Water Commission (CWC), but on detailed examination, it is felt that CWC along with its role as appraisal authority, taking work of DPRs may not be advisable. Further, CWC has also to outsource certain tasks of the DPR preparation. So, it will be better to prepare a list of the agencies who have the capabilities of doing the task and call for tender from these agencies to decide the agency competent to do the job. For taking a final decision in the matter, the Secretary, MoWR requested all the Members of the Committee to provide their suggestions/views. Subsequently, the Chairman requested the Director General, NWDA & Member-Secretary of the Committee to take initiation for deliberating the agenda items of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Committee.

While taking up the agenda items, the DG, NWDA & Member-Secretary of the Committee mentioned about the comments that had been received from Prof. A.C. Kamaraj and Dr. Ashok Khosla, Members of the Committee on the minutes of the first meeting of the Committee that was held on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2005. The minutes of the first meeting as circulated were confirmed duly taking the comments on record. He then requested the Chief Engineer (N), NWDA to give a power point presentation on Ken-Betwa link project. CE(N), NWDA gave a detailed presentation on the project by giving explanation on various important components/aspects of the projects namely on implementation of the proposed project at Daudhan on the river Ken and other four projects proposed by the Govt. of M.P. in the upper reaches of Betwa basin. The presentation also stressed on the details of conveyance system that is proposed to be used for transfer of surplus water from Ken basin to Betwa basin to the drought prone areas of Raisen and Vidisha districts of M.P., total quantum of water transfer ( $1020 \text{ Mm}^3$ ) for meeting the requirements of drinking water supply ( $12 \text{ Mm}^3$ ), transmission losses ( $37 \text{ Mm}^3$ ) and irrigation utilization in Betwa basin ( $659 \text{ Mm}^3$ ) and other incidental benefits, viz., cost aspects, environmental & social issues and concerns of the concerned States of M.P. and U.P. Hard copies of the presentation were also circulated amongst the participants.

After the completion of the presentation, the Chairman requested the members to offer views/suggestions to make the consultative process on the ILR project more meaningful and finalize the ToR for the DPR preparation.

The views/suggestions made by the Members of the Committee are:

**1. Shri P. Sen, Retired Member CWC, Kolkata, West Bengal :**

- (a) The availability of lean seasonal flow in the river Ganga and the riparian rights of the people, those who are settled downstream of the proposed project need to be addressed and a detailed simulation study at the project site by taking into consideration of water balance at the site on monthly or 10 daily basis may be carried out and incorporated in the DPR of Ken-Betwa project.
- (b) He opined that CWC should also be involved and not be bypassed in the process of DPR preparation as the Commission has field investigation units set up with all the capabilities, which are sufficient enough to undertake the task such as preparation of DPRs.

After hearing the views of Shri P. Sen on the issue of bypassing CWC in DPR preparation, the Secretary, MoWR clarified that there is, no thinking of bypassing CWC in the process of DPR preparation of proposed link projects and he also got the views confirmed from the Chairman, CWC. The Chairman, CWC explained the logic behind the decision of not taking up DPR preparation by CWC and agreed to stand as a monitoring agency in the completion of the task with respect to DPR preparation.

**2. Prof. M.N. Madhyastha, Emeritus Fellow, Deptt. of Chemical Engineering, National Institute of Technology, Surathkal, Mangalore :**

- (a) Rivers both at head as well as mouth regions would be considered while addressing the issues on submergence of wildlife and breeding places, water qualities and the downstream/coastal regional ecological aspects in maintaining the balance of the eco system of the specific areas.
- (b) The details on various aspects given under the FR study of NWDA are in nutshell shape and for understanding the detailed pulse of the specific areas, field visits are required to be arranged for identifying and studying the specific aspects for incorporation in the ToR of the DPR preparation.
- (c) While outsourcing the task of DPR preparation, the observations/views of the Committee should be handed over to the outsourcing agency for incorporation in the DPR and care should be taken to maintain the quality of work at each stage with the help of Monitoring Committee/Authority which may be constituted for this purpose.

**3. Prof. A.C. Kamaraj, Chairman, NAWAD Council, Madurai, Tamil Nadu :**

- (a) Suggested that more time gap has occurred in between holding of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> meetings of the Committee and desired that meetings be held frequently.

- (b) Some of the Peninsular Component link alignments are coming very near to the costal lines and should be tried to align about 250 Km. inside of the coastal lines to achieve feasibility and supports from various stakeholders on ILR projects.
- (c) Diversions of water under ILR programme have been proposed from higher levels to lower levels and further proposed for utilization of water to higher elevations through pumping and may create lots of hindrances with respect to tech-economical viability and cost-benefit effectiveness. This aspect should be dealt in detail, while going for aligning the main link/branch canals and distributaries that are to be used for water conveyances and utilization purposes.

**4. Shri Rajinder Singh, Director, Tarun Bharat Sangh :**

- (a) Apprehended about the effectiveness of the manifesto of the UPA Govt. under their National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) to cover the process of ILR in a consultative manner.
- (b) Adequate steps are to be taken in creating awareness on ILR amongst various stakeholders and local people for the purpose of attaining support and confidence. The indulgence on various aspects of ILR and adoption of mitigative control measures through consultation with local people would help to minimize disputes/dharnas on sharing of water for drinking, industry, irrigation and hydropower etc. and rehabilitation & resettlement.
- (c) In a democratic country like India, it is necessary to encourage people's participation in decision making meetings by involving Govt. representatives, NGOs and local people at grass root level starting with Gram Panchayat level in identifying the exact stakeholders of ILR and considering their views for incorporation in ToR for DPR preparation of identified ILR projects. The process may be called as, "Water Literacy Campaign".

**5. Dr. Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives, New Delhi :**

- (a) It is encouraging to see the NCMP of the UPA Govt. on ILR and its view to process the proceedings of the ILR programme starting with Peninsular Component links in a fully consultative manner.
- (b) For making the consultative process more effective and to be completed within a prescribed time interval, it would be better to constitute a committee by involving distinguished personalities like S/Shri A.D. Mohile & Nitin Desai, Ms. Medha Patkar in Civil Society Dialogue.

- (c) There is a need to look at specific items regarding suitability of soils, adoptability of cropping patterns, possibility of conjunctive uses of surface and ground water and development of water harvesting structures at various locations of the basin under consideration to have integrated structures both big and small in nature.
- (d) There are lots of confusions still in the minds of the people with respect to ecological imbalances which might come up due to implementation of Ken-Betwa scheme especially in the region of Panna National Park and downstream command areas. Doubts are also there about the cost benefit effectiveness. Coverage of waste land development aspects through the project should be covered very cautiously and carefully through adoption of GIS and remote sensing techniques.
- (e) A two tier approach should be considered in dealing with the awareness campaign for the stakeholders of the ILR, starting with tehsil & block levels in the first tier and progressing to district levels in the second tier stage. In the campaign representatives of both Govt. and civil societies and local peoples should be involved for arriving at a mutual understandings and decisions on various aspects.

**6. Shri Z. Hasan, Former Secretary, MoWR :**

- (a) Expressed his views for conducting detailed feasibility report on the four projects namely: Neemkheda dam, Barari barrage, Kesari dam and Richhan dam proposed by Govt. of M.P. in upper reaches of Betwa basin, to check the desirability and adoptability of the sites for further development of water resources for the Ken-Betwa scheme.
- (b) Requested to consider the ILR projects similar to other water resources developmental projects like Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojana and Bhakra Nangal Beas projects. Because of the enormous projection of cost of the ILR Project to the order of Rs.5, 60,000 crores, lots of apprehensions and confusions have been forced to enter in the mind set of the various stakeholders and general public on ILR and should be wiped out by providing correct and appropriate information in the public domain.
- (c) NWDA feasibility reports are not sufficient enough to cover the detailed aspects of ILR and hence preparation of DPR by covering detailed aspects are required to achieve support from the stakeholders, before taking up the project in hand.
- (d) Since ILR project is a national project, there is a need to involve all the concerned departments under the Govts. to take care of the monitoring of various aspects like techno-economic aspects by CWC, environmental mitigation and management by Ministry of Environment & Forests, socio-

economic aspects by Ministries of Rural and Urban Developments and Social Justice & Empowerment. Studies on alternative options are also required simultaneously for ILR by NWDA and Ministry of Agriculture etc. while outsourcing the DPR preparation to achieve an integrated approach both at micro and macro level planning and developments. If required, a master plan may be prepared for each basin/sub-basin in consultation with the experts from concerned fields.

- (e) Creation of informed public are necessary to build up positive environment for implementation of ILR schemes and the rehabilitation & resettlement packages are also to be prepared very cautiously and projected along with the commencement of each project to have a glimpse of the benefits that are going to be obtained to the project affected people in new locations.

**7. Views received from Dr. S. Bhowmik, Additional Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests are given below for incorporation in the ToR for DPR preparation:**

- (a) For any project under Interlinking of Rivers, prior permission of the Central Government shall be required under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, if any forest land including deemed forest land is required to be used for non-forestry purposes.
- (b) In case the forest land involved in any project under Interlinking of Rivers falls within any National Park/ Sanctuary, clearance of the National Board of Wildlife and permission of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India is required before the project can be considered by the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
- (c) Environmental Impacts Studies in the project impoundment areas should be conducted by giving special attention to do full justice to maintain the balance of both community structures and ecosystem functions of the region in a natural manner.

The Secretary, MoWR thanked the participants for participating actively in the meeting and expressed that the processes would continue over time to build up better understandings on various issues of the ILR projects and incorporation of the same in the ToR for the DPR preparations. While concluding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting the Secretary, MoWR and Chairman of the Committee assured that adequate steps would be taken to arrange field visit to specific areas of the ILR projects under consideration and conduct the meetings of the Committee frequently to make the consultative process on ILR more vibrant and meaningful.

The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

## **Annexure-1**

**List of Participants who attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers held on 28.10.05 at Committee Room, Central Water Commission, New Delhi.**

Shri J. Harinarayan, Secretary, MoWR

In Chair

### **Members of the Committee:**

#### **S/Shri**

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|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | R. Jeyaseelan, Chairman, CWC                            | Member                   |
| 2. | Hasib Ahmed, Director,<br>Social Justice & Empowerment. | Representing Secy., SJ&E |
| 3. | Dr. Ashok Khosla  | Member                   |
| 4. | Rajinder Singh  | Member                   |
| 5. | M.N. Madhyastha   | Member                   |
| 6. | P. Sen  | Member                   |
| 7. | Z. Hasan  | Member                   |
| 8. | A.C. Kamaraj  | Member                   |
| 9. | R.K. Sharma, DG, NWDA                                   | Member-Secretary         |

### **Apology:**

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|----|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass | Member |
| 2. | Secretary, MoE&F           | Member |

### **Special Invitees:**

1. S.K.Agrawal, Member (RM), CWC
2. Indra Raj, Commissioner (PR), MoWR
3. Ranjit Kumar, Sr. Advocate, Learned Amicus Curiae, Supreme Court

### **CWC:**

1. S.K.Sinha, Chief Engineer, CWC

### **NWDA:**

1. N.K.Bhandari, Chief Engineer (HQ), NWDA, New Delhi.
2. M.S.Gupta, Chief Engineer (S), NWDA, Hyderabad.
3. M.K.Sinha, Chief Engineer (N), NWDA, Lucknow.
4. R. K. Jain, Director (T), NWDA, New Delhi.
5. K.P. Gupta, Superintending Engineer, NWDA, New Delhi.