

**Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers held on 8.1.2008 at New Delhi.**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) was held on 8.1.2008 at New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources.

The list of participants of the Meeting is given at Annexure-I.

Secretary (WR) welcomed all the members of the Committee, Special Invitees and other participants and requested Director General, NWDA & Member-Secretary of the Committee to take up the agenda items for discussion.

**Item 4.1 : Confirmation of the Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**

As no comments were received from any of the members/invitees, the minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting were confirmed.

**Item 4.2.1 : Follow up action on the decision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting.**

It was decided that after ascertaining their convenient date, NWDA will arrange field visit for the interested members to visit the Ken-Betwa Project area.

**Item No. 4.2.2 : Follow up action on the decision of 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting.**

As decided during the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, Director General, NWDA informed the members that the suggestions/queries, fortythree in number which were received on the website of NWDA had been compiled and annexed to the Agenda. He intimated that all queries have been appropriately replied to.

Director General, NWDA informed the members that the suggestion of Shri Ranjit Kumar, Amicus Curiae, Supreme Court has been referred to the Ministry of Water Resources.

Reacting to this, Shri Ranjit Kumar mentioned that under the River Board Act, 1956 there are certain powers vested with Govt. of India and the subject of water including Interstate Rivers/ILR may be dealt by Centre without any modification so no fresh constitutional amendment is required. Centre have adequate power under Entry 56 of List-II read with the River Board Act 1956.

Shri Z. Hasan mentioned that Entry 56 empowers the Parliament to enact laws for development and regulation of the Interstate Rivers and the subject of interlinking of rivers may be considered keeping in view the broader perspective of water resources development & planning.

Secretary (WR) mentioned that the issue regarding inclusion of provisions related to water in the concurrent list has been referred to the Inter State Council for inclusion of the same in the Terms of Reference for the Commission on Centre-State Relations.

**Item No. 4.3 : Preparation of Detailed Project Report of Ken-Betwa link – Environmental Impact Assessment and studies of socio-economic aspects.**

Director General, NWDA informed the members that the suggestions given by the members of the Committee on the ToR for carrying out EIA studies of Ken-Betwa link during the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting have been incorporated in the ToR. The modified ToR has been approved by MoE&F on 10.4.2007.

Members were of the view that the letter of MoE&F dated (10.4.2007) conveying the approval of the ToR should have been attached to the Agenda. It was decided that it will be circulated to the members. Dr. S. Bhowmik from MoE&F informed that a clearance from Supreme Court may also be required as Panna Tiger Reserve Forest area is coming under submergence. He also stated that this condition was clearly stated in

MoE&F clearance/approval letter. Secretary (WR) instructed NWDA to take necessary action in the matter.

Shri Hasan mentioned that issues related to climatic change should have been included in the ToR under the Item "Air Environment".

Shri Rajinder Singh mentioned that adequate steps should be taken for public acceptance for the ILR project. During the last meeting, the suggestion made by him for inclusion of more members in the Committee or hearing the views of experts like Shri G.D. Agarwal, Smt. Vandana Shiva & Smt. Medha Patekar have not been considered. He was of the opinion that public acceptance of the project is necessary to avoid future social conflicts. For this purpose, public seminar should be organised in the project area to generate a favourable public opinion at large.

The Chairperson clarified that public hearing is a part of the EIA studies. There is no question of ignoring the stakeholders and their views are duly considered. She also mentioned that keeping in view the size of the Committee, it is not possible to include all the experts working in the field of water resources, environment, social science etc. However, as a follow up to the views expressed by Shri Rajinder Singh and Supreme Court observations, two more members namely Shri Himanshu Thakkar and Prof. Vijay Paranjpye have been included in the Committee. As far as the consideration of the views of various NGOs /institutions/individuals, organizing a seminar/symposium may be considered at the appropriate time.

Shri Himanshu Thakkar expressed the need to add some more items in the ToR of Ken-Betwa link. He was of the opinion that the feasibility report/their gist may be prepared in Hindi and sent to all the Gram Sabhas in the area for their comments, though this is not a legal requirement. Reacting to the award of the consultancy work of EIA studies of Ken-Betwa link, he opined that M/s Agricultural Finance Corporation Ltd. was not the right organisation to carry out such studies as per its past record. A major role of this Committee is to advise the Government on environmental and socio-economic issues covered in the ToR for preparation of detailed project report. The Committee did not

have the opportunity to apply its mind on such issues as the meeting is taking place after a long gap. It is better to make mid course correction rather than deliberating after report is completed.

Director General, NWDA informed that as the ToR have already been finalised after incorporating the suggestions from members of the Committee and the work awarded to the consultant therefore, it may not be appropriate to review the ToR for EIA studies of Ken-Betwa link at this stage. However, the suggestions made by the members will be considered while awarding the work of EIA studies for DPR of other links to be taken up in future by NWDA. As far as, the award of consultancy work for EIA studies of Ken-Betwa link is concerned, due procedure has been followed by NWDA. The Chief Engineer (HQ) explained that initially, NWDA invited the Expression of Interests from various firms through advertisements in leading national newspapers. The same were evaluated by a committee constituted for this purpose under the Chairmanship of Chief Engineer (EMO), CWC. Based on experience, firms were short listed for sending the Request for Proposal Document (Tender Document). In response to this, technical and financial bids submitted by the short listed firms were evaluated by the Committee. Finally, on the basis of the recommendation made by the Committee and approval of the competent authority, the work was awarded to M/s Agricultural Finance Corporation Ltd., Hyderabad.

Prof. M.N. Madhyastha desired the intervention of the Committee of Experts for useful contribution to the EIA studies to have mid-course correction if needed. Dr. (Mrs.) Mala Kapur Shankardass mentioned that as the consultant has already submitted the Inception Report, the same may also be shared with the members of the Committee.

Director General, NWDA informed the members that the consultant is carrying out the work according to the ToR and is likely to submit the first interim report by April, 2008 and that can be circulated to members for discussion in the next meeting.

The members, in general, wanted that the frequency of the meetings of the Committee should be increased. The Secretary (WR) appreciated their concern and it was decided that henceforth the meetings of the Committee will be held quarterly.

Prof. Vijay Paranjpye expressed the opinion that the NWDA proposals should also be made available in regional languages to have a general public opinion about the ILR project. The public hearing as a part of EIA studies in respect of individual project is something different from the public opinion about such a large project. The issue alongwith the work done so far should be publicly debated. Considering its national importance, a public debate involving media and people should be there to dispel the fears in the minds of the general public. He also mentioned that the NCAER report is not kept in the public domain.

Secretary (WR) clarified that the matter of ILR has been discussed widely at various fora as well as the media during the last few years. She added that the working of NWDA is very much transparent and efforts are being made to put everything on the website so that it is accessible to all. Regarding the NCAER report, the Chairperson informed that it has not been finalized and it will be put up on the website after its finalization.

Chief Engineer (N), NWDA informed that FR of Ken-Betwa link and Executive Summary of some links in Hindi have been put on the website along with a brief summary of the Ken-Betwa link project also in Hindi. The same has also been distributed by NWDA officials during their field visit to villages. Shri Ranjit Kumar suggested that all such material, minutes and agenda of all the meetings of the Committee may be uploaded on the website of NWDA. As it is not possible to interact with all the NGOs/public representatives/individuals in a conventional manner, therefore, to involve all these in the discussions related to ILR, it is better to invite suggestions on the website and clarified by NWDA.

Shri Himanshu Thakkar mentioned that the water balance assessment made by NWDA in its studies does not indicate its impact on the ground water resources specially in the downstream and upstream areas of storage/diversion structures. Further, sub-basinwise

assessment has not been made regarding the rain water harvesting potential. He informed that he has carried out some studies in this regard and would like to present it in the next meeting. He also mentioned that no additional irrigation potential has been created in the last few years and irrigation potential created is not utilized. He quoted irrigation potential data available on the website of Ministry of Agriculture. Reacting to this, Commissioner (PR), MOWR informed that the actual data based on information from the States, field monitoring by CWC and satellite imaging relating to irrigation potential created and irrigation potential utilized is available with the Ministry of Water Resources. MOWR is taking up the matter with Ministry of Agriculture & Planning Commission to reconcile the figures.

Prof. Vijay Paranjpye mentioned that DPR stage level improvements are always there. For these improvements, recent 3-4 years data pertaining to rainfall and stream flows should be used in the studies carried out by NWDA. He also wanted that climatological effects should be considered in the report.

Dr. Ashok Khosla expressed that in addition to the environmental issues, there are some more issues like cropping pattern, industrial changes, type of water distribution system etc. which need to be considered. He was of the view that impact of ILR projects on other sectors need to be kept in view.

Shri A.C. Kamaraj mentioned that priority of the Govt. is to take up peninsular component of the ILR. The work of preparation of the DPR of the links are being taken up only after arriving at the consensus amongst the concerned States. In the process, many precious years are being lost thereby also causing cost overrun. In order to have a faster implementation, we must have a target for each link.

Shri Kamaraj also mentioned that he has framed a proposal as a complimentary project to the ILR. He had held discussions with the officers of various State Govts. on his proposal. The Chairperson requested him to make available copies of his proposal to members of the Committee.

**Item No. 4.4: Suggestion of Shri P. Sen, Member regarding extension of Krishna (Almatti) – Pennar link upto Palar river.**

Director General, NWDA explained that the suggestion of Shri P. Sen for extension of Krishna (Almatti) – Pennar link upto the starting point of Palar river to benefit the water scarce region of Kolar district in Karnataka has been examined by NWDA. It is observed that Kolar and its adjacent area is situated at an altitude ranging from 700 m to 1300 m and it is not viable techno-economically to provide irrigation to the areas of Kolar district by pumping through Krishna (Almatti)- Pennar link. Shri Sen mentioned that if ILR projects in South India are fully implemented, it will be an achievement par excellence, in the whole world. He complemented that the peninsular links prepared by NWDA are very well done. However, he gave a number of suggestions for improvement of the studies which are at Annexure-II.

The Director General, NWDA appreciated the suggestions given by Shri Sen and assured that appropriate directions will be issued to the field offices of NWDA for taking action on the suggestions.

Shri Z. Hasan expressed the opinion that the ILR project may be implemented in two phases. In its first phase, the projects already planned and investigated by the State Govts. (Manibhadra, Inchampalli, Polavaram, Ken) etc. may be taken up as normal water resources project. In addition to the storage proposed by the State Govts., extra storage may be considered for ILR projects. In the second phase, the Interbasin Water transfer links can be taken up.

**Item No. 4.5: Re-constitution of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers.**

The information was noted by the Committee members.

**Item No. 4.6: Any other Item with the permission of Chair.**

Shri Himanshu Thakkar mentioned that during the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, DG, NWDA mentioned that the ILR project will be implemented in the most transparent manner and after

consensus amongst the concerned States. He expressed apprehension that the Polavaram project which is also a component of ILR is under construction. However, till date no consensus has been reached among the concerned States. Even Ministry of Environment & Forests has not given the forest clearance and R&R plan has not been approved by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. CWC has not cleared the project. The State Govts. of Orissa and Chhattisgarh have reservations about the area coming under submergence in their States. Public hearings were not held in the project area in an appropriate manner and some human right violations were also reported in the project area during public hearing. Considering the above, recently National Environmental Appellate Authority (NEAA) quashed the environmental clearance given by MoE&F to the Polavaram project. He mentioned that the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) assessment for the project is also not assessed in an appropriate manner. He further mentioned that FRs prepared by NWDA need to be reviewed by some reputed agency for improvement. He mentioned that it is necessary to find a least cost alternative for the purpose for which the ILR project is proposed as per the basic requirement given in ToR of EIA studies.

Responding to this, Commissioner (PR), MOWR mentioned that there is an interstate agreement on the execution of the Polavaram Project between the State of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh (now Chhattisgarh), which is also taken as records in the Godavari Tribunal Award. Ministry of Water Resources and Central Water Commission are working within the framework of provisions of Godavari Award. The project is at present under techno-economic appraisal in CWC. Several meetings have been held with the concerned States and as a outcome of these meetings some fresh surveys have been planned to assess the submergence. There is nominal submergence in the State of Orissa and Chhattisgarh and it is proposed to construct embankments to avoid submergence. Major submergence is in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Based on the Supreme Court's directions, Ministry of Tribal Affairs have considered the projects proposal and given clearance. He also mentioned that the PMF is mainly designed for the safety of the dam and not for R&R plan.



Shri Hasan mentioned that as per the Godavari Water Dispute Tribunal Award, the States can use their shares as per their planned uses and Godavari is having a large surplus of the water above certain level which can be used for hydropower generation which will also minimize the submergence. Considering the complex nature of the subject of hydrology generally 100 years flow series is considered to work out the 75% dependable flows.

Prof. Paranjpye expressed that (a) Maharashtra is transferring about 18% of Krishna water from a deficit basin to a highly surplus basin (b) the committee may have a look on a best water balance study of a river basin and a best DPR of a link project as a Benchmark and may come out with suggestions.

Shri Rajinder Singh mentioned about the problem of non-availability of water resources data.

Secretary (WR) informed that specific data can be obtained by the members from CWC.

Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass suggested that members can discuss such issues on the website of NWDA and for this, password may be provided to the members for online discussions. Secretary (WR) agreed that NWDA website can be modified to have an online forum for discussion by members.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks.

## **Annexure-I**

**List of Participants who attended the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Interlinking of Rivers held on 8.1.2008 at New Delhi.**

Mrs. Gauri Chatterjee, Secretary, MoWR

In Chair

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

#### **S/Shri**

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Ashok Khosla                          | Member                     |
| 2. Sh. Rajendra Singh                        | Member                     |
| 3. Prof. M.N. Madhyastha                     | Member                     |
| 4. Sh. Z. Hasan                              | Member                     |
| 5. Dr. (Mrs.) Mala Kapur Shankardass         | Member                     |
| 6. Sh. A.C. Kamaraj                          | Member                     |
| 7. Sh. P. Sen                                | Member                     |
| 8. Prof. Vijay Paranjpye                     | Member                     |
| 9. Sh. Himanshu Thakkar                      | Member                     |
| 10. Sh. M. S. Gupta,<br>Director (BPMO), CWC | Representing Chairman, CWC |
| 11. Dr. S. Bhowmik, Addl. Director, MOE&F    | Representing Secy, MOE&F   |
| 12. Sh. A.D. Bhardwaj, DG, NWDA              | Member-Secretary           |

### **Apology:**

1. Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

### **Special Invitees:**

1. Shri S. Manoharan, Addl. Secretary (WR)
2. Sh. Indra Raj, Commissioner (PR), MoWR
3. Sh. Ranjit Kumar, Sr. Advocate, Amicus Curiae, Supreme Court

### **NWDA:**

1. Sh. M.K.Sinha, Chief Engineer (N), NWDA, Lucknow.
2. Sh. N.K.Bhandari, Chief Engineer (HQ), NWDA, New Delhi.
3. Sh. P.R. Rao, Chief Engineer (S), NWDA, Hyderabad.
4. Sh. Muzaffar Ahmad, Superintending Engineer, NWDA, New Delhi.
5. Sh. Jabbar Ali, Deputy Director, NWDA, New Delhi.

## **Annexure-II**

PRASAD SEN  
Chief Engineer (Retd.), CWC &  
Member, Committee of Experts, ILR

57/1 Raja Direndra St.  
Kolkatta-700006  
Tel. : 033-2350-4759  
8<sup>th</sup> January, 2008.

### **Suggestions of Shri P. Sen, Member, Committee of Experts for ILR for consideration of the Committee on 8.1.08.**

First of all kindly allow me to express my extreme gratitude to the NWDA engineers for critically analyzing my humble proposal of extending a branch of the Krishna-Almatti link channel to the water scarcity area of Kolar in eastern Karnataka.

During my service period in CWC, I had the opportunity to visit various places in South India where water scarcity is acute. Even after my retirement, I am often staying at a water scarce zone in Karnataka and know the plight of the poor people.

If the ILR projects in South India are fully implemented, it will be an achievement par excellence, incomparable in the whole world.

I have studied the brief description of all the Peninsular links prepared by NWDA. These are very well done.

A few humble suggestions came to my mind, which I would like to place before the august body of experts present here, for their kind consideration.

1. Due to the wide variation of altitude in the Peninsular region, large areas which are drought prone have to be left out from the commands of the links.

My request is please prepare a map superimposing the drought prone areas in South India vis-à-vis the command areas of the different link channels. A drought area map is already available in the Central Water Commission.

2. A statistical analysis may be prepared from the agriculturists of the areas, identifying the period when drought condition generally develops there.
3. In the above mentioned super-imposed maps locate the existing lakes and tanks which normally serve for the irrigation and drinking water.
4. Let the trunk canal routes of the links proposed by NWDA remain intact. In addition to that a few branches may be identified (pipe-lines, tunnels and open canals) which can serve those left-out drought prone zones by occasional pumping, when drought become acute. These pumping may be resorted to only during 2 or 3 water scarce months in a year. If the weather forecasts can predict drought, the pumping can be started even earlier.

5. The cost of these pumping and maintenance of the pumping systems can be shared by the beneficiary States and the Central Govt. jointly.
6. The extra cost for the construction of the pump houses, pipe-lines, tunnels, channels, booster systems etc. may be included in the main project itself, to be borne by the Centre.

If the above proposals are considered acceptable, it will definitely make the link project all encompassing and highly beneficial for all the suffering villages in the Southern India.

Sd/-  
(P. Sen)