Telangana Today- 09- May-2023

Polavaram: AP delaying joint survey, says TS

Urges CWC to ensure it is held before monsoon

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

Stating that the Andhra Pradesh government was delaying the joint survey on the backwater effect of the Polavaram project in Telangana, the State government urged the Central Water Commission (CWC) to direct the officials concerned to commence it with or without the involvement of AP under the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) within the time frame fixed by the Supreme Court.

Telangana Engineering-in-Chief C Muralidhar on Monday wrote to the CWC Chairman asking him to intervene in the issue and take up the survey of the backwaters immediately. Though two weeks had passed since the data was furnished by AP, there was no response from that State nor from the PPA, he said, adding that the monsoon would hit the State in the next 25 days. Hence, it was necessary that the survey be completed before its arrival.

Stating that 954.15 acres would come under submergence under the Full Reservoir Level (FRL) condition of the Polavaram project, he urged the PPA to immediately start ground-truthing for taking up suitable protection measures as per the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal Authority's provisions.

Muralidhar also stated that there was a need to address the issue of demarcation of areas affected due to the drainage congestion of the Kinnerasani and Mureddu Vagu rivers as per the CWC report consequent to the National Green Tribunal orders. Muralidhar also urged the CWC to take up ground-truthing of the areas coming under the submergence due to FRL condition in seven major identified local streams for taking suitable protection measures. Subsequently, a similar exercise needs to be extended for the remaining 30 local streams, he added.

Muralidhar brought to the CWC's notice that there was a need to check the verification of important levels in Bhadrachalam town, including eight outfall sluices, the historic Srirama temple and near the (Manuguru) Heavy Water Plant by undertaking a joint survey immediately.

The Tribune- 09- May-2023

16 hydel power projects register for water cess

PRATIBHA CHAUHAN
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, MAY 8

Sixteen of 172 hydroelectric power projects in the state have registered themselves for the imposition of water cess. The Jal Shakti Department had issued notices to 172 such projects in April, directing them to register themselves with it within a month for the purpose of water cess.

Two private power firms had challenged the imposition of the cess in the HP High Court.

Interestingly, many government and central public sector undertakings (PSUs) have registered themselves for the cess after receiving the notices. This assumes significance as the Union Ministry for Power had on April 25 written a letter to all state governments and power companies such as the NHPC and the NTPC, among others, terming water cess as illegal and unconstitutional and asked them to challenge it.

172 ISSUED NOTICES IN APRIL

- The Jal Shakti Dept had issued notices to 172 hydroelectric power projects in April, directing them to register with it within a month for the purpose of water cess
- Two private power companies had challenged the imposition of the cess in the Himachal High Court

"Besides some projects of the HP State Electricity Board, the Chamera power project being run by the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) in Chamba has registered itself for the imposition of water cess," says a senior government official. Besides, some private hydel power projects, including on the Parbati and Baspa rivers, had also complied with the directive of the Jal Shakti Department regarding registration for the cess.

The Centre, in its letter, also stated "Articles 287 and 288 of the Constitution prohibits the imposition of taxes on power consumed by it or sold to it".

MP Pradhan, Director, Union Ministry of Power, had written to the Chief Secretaries of all states with regard to the imposition of the water cess. "The cess is illegal and unconstitutional. Any tax or duty on power generation, which encompasses all types of generation, thermal, hydro, wind, solar, nuclear, etc, is illegal and unconstitutional," he had said.

The letter had cited eight constitutional provisions stating that all such taxes or duties could not be under the guise of electricity generation and if any tax or duty had been levied by any state, it should be withdrawn promptly.

Millennium Post- 09- May-2023

Cyclone Mocha likely to move towards Myanmar-B'desh coast

MeT dept asks fishermen, ships, trawlers and small boats not to venture into the south-east Bay of Bengal

Highlights

» The cyclone will be named Mocha, a name suggested by Yemen after the Red Sea port city, which is known to have introduced coffee to the world over 500 years ago

» IMD has suggested regulation of tourism and offshore activities and shipping near A&N Islands and over the sea areas of southeast and central Bay of Bengal till Friday

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: A low pressure area formed over south-east Bay of Bengal on Monday is expected to intensify into a cyclone and likely to move towards the Bangladesh-Myanmar coast later this week, the weather office said here.

The low pressure area is expected to concentrate into a depression by Tuesday evening and then intensify into a cyclonic storm the next day, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of IMD, told reporters here.

He asked fishermen, ships, trawlers and small boats not to venture into the south-east Bay of Bengal and urged those in the region to return to the coast.

The cyclone will be named Mocha (Mokha), a name suggested by Yemen after the Red Sea port city, which is known to have introduced coffee to the world over 500 years ago.

"The cyclonic storm will move initially north-northwest to central Bay of Bengal till May 11 and then re-curve and move north-northeast towards Bangladesh-Myanmar coast," Mohapatra said.

He said squally wind speed reaching 50-60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph is likely over southeast Bay of Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and adjoining Andaman Sea on Tuesday.

Mohapatra said under the influence of the weather system, Andaman and Nicobar islands are expected to experience very heavy rainfall on Tuesday.

The weather office has suggested regulation of tourism and offshore activities and shipping near Andaman and Nicobar Islands and over the sea areas of southeast and central Bay of Bengal till Friday.

Millennium Post- 09- May-2023

'CATCH THE RAIN' CAMPAIGN

Central teams to inspect water sources in 150 stressed districts

DHIRENDRA KUMAR

NEW DELHI: Concerned over groundwater shortage in some parts of the country, the government has decided to send a Central team to 150 water stressed districts to take stock of the groundwater situation scientifically before the onset of the monsoon as well as after the monsoon.

As per a senior official, the team would consist of one nodal officer and one technical officer and they would make two field visits in the identified 150 water stressed districts.

The move has been initiated as a part of Jal Shakti Ministry's 'catch the rain campaign'. As per the official, during the first field visit, the central teams will assess the preparatory and planning for the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA).

The first visit has been planned before the onset of monsoon, while the central teams would be deputed for the second field visit in post-monsoon preferably in the period of June to October, 2023.

"It's a hard fact that the world cannot be imagined without water and every drop of water is important for the survival of every living being. With this message, the Central team would reach out to the residents of 150 districts to understand their problems," the official said.

"The ministry is trying to get a real-time assessment of the sources of water. On the basis of the findings of the central team, the government would formulate a robust strategy to make available drinking water for all in the 150 identified districts," the official said.

The 'catch the rain' campaign, which started on March 4, would continue till November 30 this year. The campaign would focus on strengthening the water sources of 150 water stressed districts identified by the Jal Jeevan Mission of the ministry.

Millennium Post- 09- May-2023

Time for transition

VIRENDER SINGH LATHER

The governments of Punjab and Haryana should incentivise DSR cultivation by allaying farmers' concerns around productivity and risk involved in adopting the new technology

In Punjab, the water table is falling at a rate of 86 cm per year, leading to a precarious situation where no underground water will be available across the state in the coming 15-20 years

The Union Ministry of Water Resources estimates that unless remedial measures are taken, acute scarcity of groundwater may grip many parts of Punjab and Haryana, where several blocks may completely run out of groundwater not just for irrigation, but even for drinking purposes over the next 15 to 20 years. The Green Revolution, which ensured India's food security during the last five decades, led to the overexploitation of groundwater in these states through the installation of millions of tube wells since 1966. Worst of all, the water-intensive agronomic practices of transplanted rice were introduced to these semi-arid states as part of the packages of IRRI-dwarf high-yielding varieties of paddy, which have become the primary reason for groundwater depletion (the main source for drinking and irrigation).

Groundwater overexploitation has grown significantly due to the fast population growth, intensive agricultural activities, and agriculture-based industries. One of the most agriculturally developed areas in the country, the Punjab-Haryana plain, has experienced groundwater depletion in several administrative blocks. In Punjab, 78.9 per cent of the blocks have been classified as 'overexploited.' In 18 of the 22 districts in Punjab, the water table dropped by more than a meter every year between 1998 and 2018. According to a report, Punjab had 192,000 tube wells in 1970-1971, which had increased to 1.38 million by 2011-2012. The area irrigated by canal has shrunk from 58.4 per cent to 28 per cent over the last 60 years, while the area irrigated by tube wells has increased from 41.1 per cent to 71.3 per cent. According to government data in Punjab, currently, the water table is falling at a rate of 86 cm per year, leading to a precarious situation where no underground water will be available across the state in the coming 15-20 years.

The irrigation water requirement for puddle-transplanted rice is 140 cm, while in the DSR technique, it is only 100 cm

According to the first-ever village-level survey by the Haryana Water Resources Authority (HWRA), 1,780 out of 6,885 villages in the state were severely groundwater-stressed, with groundwater dropping to 30 meters, and in another 1,903 villages, the groundwater level was found at a depth ranging from 10-20 meters. Groundwater quantity, as well as quality, is alarmingly deteriorating, leading to indebtedness for farmers and cases of farmer suicides, and a prophecy of shifting paddy cultivation to the eastern states of India.

As per the HWRA, Haryana is facing a deficiency of about 14 lakh crore litres of water annually (14BCM). There is an urgent need to manage and utilise the accessible water logically and sensibly. With the groundwater crisis looming large in the country's key grain-producing states of Punjab and Haryana, both governments are pushing farmers to move away from water-guzzling practices of transplanted rice and instead adopt direct seeding of rice (DSR) technology. In a bid to motivate farmers to adopt DSR, the Punjab government has announced an incentive of Rs 1,500 per acre to the farmers for sowing paddy through this innovative technology. In the neighbouring state of Haryana, the government has introduced a cash incentive of Rs 4,000 per acre to the farmers.

DSR for groundwater conservation

Generally, since the era of the Green Revolution, farmers in Punjab and Haryana have been sowing paddy by flooding (puddling) their fields with water. However, over the years, this practice has resulted in a depletion of groundwater levels. Punjab's average groundwater level has dropped to 170 feet, and the situation in Haryana is similar. In Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), there is no need to flood the field for paddy seeding. Instead, they are sown just like other cereals, pulses, and oilseed crops in a VATTAR field prepared after pre-sown irrigation. After sowing, the field needs water only after 21 days compared to transplanted rice, where the fields need to be flooded before cultivation, resulting in high water consumption. On average, the irrigation water requirement for puddle-transplanted rice is 140 cm, while in the DSR technique, it is only 100 cm, resulting in a water-saving of about 30 per cent. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana informed in a press conference on April 1, 2023, that "During the Kharif-2022 season, rice was successfully cultivated on 72,000 acres through DSR technology, saving 31,500 crore litres of water," which means that "if the total area under paddy, 33 lakh acres, shifted to DSR, it would compensate for the total projected deficit demand of 14BCM water of Haryana annually."

The DSR technique, which needs far less water for irrigation, improves percolation, reduces dependence on farm labour, and improves soil health — enhancing the yield of both paddy and wheat by 5-10 per cent. It also reduces methane emissions with low carbon footprints. To draw attention to this novel technique, PAU's Vice Chancellor SS Gosal, while addressing the IRRI-BMGF-PAU-ICAR meet on March 3, announced that "TAR-VATTAR DSR technique is one of the most suitable forms of DSR for Punjab and will enable farmers to maintain their yields and contribute to environmental sustainability". The impact of DSR technology can be significant since rice-wheat is the major cropping pattern practiced on over 15 million ha of land in the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Although farmers are upbeat about the new technique of TAR-VATTAR DSR for saving costs, labour, energy, and groundwater in paddy cultivation, they are apprehensive about its productivity, risks involved in shifting to new technology, and a lower number of incentives offered by the state government. Therefore, to conserve groundwater for future generations, the Punjab-Haryana government should incentivise the eco-friendly practice of 'direct seeded rice' cultivation over water-intensive 'transplanted rice'. To change the farmers' mindset for its large-scale adoption, the state government should announce a financial assistance of Rs 10,000 per acre, which will also be recovered within the same crop season by huge savings of energy (electricity and diesel, etc.).

The writer is former Principal Scientist, ICAR-IARI, New Delhi. Views expressed are personal

Financial Express- 09- May-2023

Paddy area falls 7%, oilseeds down 7.5%

Overall kharif sowing lower, pulses/millets areas up

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, May 8

SOWING AREA UNDER summer crops — rice, pulses, millets and oilseeds — is marginally down so far at 6.77 million hectare (MH) compared to previous year, according to the agriculture ministry data on Monday.

The sowing area under rice and oilseeds (groundnut, sunflower and sesamum) has declined by 7% and 7.5%, respectively year-on-year.

The area under coverage for rice was 2.75 MH so far against 2.97 MH in the year-ago period.

Pulses, including greengram and black gram acreage, rose 6.5% 1.88 MH from 1.76 MH. Area under millets and coarse cereals rose by 6.7% to 1.14 MH from 1.07 MH a year ago.

The summer crops are grown during March-June. These crops are grown where there are assured irrigation facilities.

Summer crops such as pulses also help in nitrogen fixation in the soil prior to the taking up of kharif crops.

Meanwhile, the government last week had set a marginally higher target of 332 million tonne (MT) of foodgrains production for the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) against the estimated output of 323.5 MT in the current crop year.

The higher foodgrains — paddy, wheat, pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals production target has been set for the next crop season at the national conference on agriculture - kharif campaign-2023, organised by agriculture ministry despite the possibility of a deficient monsoon due to likely El Nino conditions developing at the later part of the monsoon months (June-September).

Summer crops such as pulses also help in nitrogen fixation in the soil prior to the taking up of kharif crops

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) last month had predicted that southwest monsoon rainfall during June-September is likely to be in the 'normal' range at 96% of the benchmark long-period average (LPA).

Rainfall between 96-104% of the LPA is considered 'normal'.

IMD will provide the updated forecast on the monsoon rains later this month.

If the IMD's prediction holds true, the country would receive 'normal' or 'above normal' rainfall for five consecutive years.

This is expected to give a boost to sowing of kharif crops — paddy, tur, soybean and cotton — while also ensuring adequate soil moisture for rabi crops like wheat, mustard and chana.

Another positive factor is that the 146 reservoirs in the country now have water levels at a comfortable 20% above the 10-year average, according to laterst Central Water Commission data.