Hindustan Times- 29- December-2023

NO BREAKTHROUGH IN PUNJAB-HARYANA TALK ON SYL CANAL WATER DISPUTE

CHANDIGARH: The stalemate over the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal — the focal point of a water-sharing dispute between Haryana and Punjab — continued on Thursday even after Union jal shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat held a joint meeting with chief ministers of Punjab and Haryana.

While Punjab reiterated that there is "no surplus water" to share, Haryana sought implementation of the Supreme Court verdict on the construction of the SYL canal and asked Punjab not to mix up the allocation of water with it.

The SYL canal issue has been a bone of contention between Punjab and Haryana for several years. The canal was conceptualised for effective sharing of water between the two states from the Ravi and Beas rivers. The project envisages a 214-km canal, of which a 122-km stretch is to be constructed in Punjab and the remaining in Haryana.

Haryana has completed the project in its territory but Punjab, which launched the work in 1982, has shelved it.

The Haryana government has been pressing for the implementation of the Supreme Court's January 15, 2002, and June 4, 2004, orders to complete the remaining portion of the SYL Canal by Punjab.

On Thursday, too, Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann said: "...We apprised Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat about it in the meeting...We are firm on our earlier stand that we do not have water (to share)."

Later, Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar said: "Baithak manohar mahaul mein hui, lekin Mann hai ki maney hi nahi (meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere, but Mann didn't agree)." HTC

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{ CITIES AND WEATHER EXTREMES } PART 3

Water conservation in era where flooding, drought collide

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NEW DELHI: Just 10km from the Bengaluru International Airport, Devanahalli town, situated in a semi-arid zone, has faced persistent water shortage. In recent years, the local municipal corporation was forced to hire private water tankers as 32 of the town's 130 borewells ran dry. But, for the last six months, the town has been using treated wastewater of Bengaluru blended with rainwater in two lakes to supply 0.2 mld (million litres per day) of water to households.

Devanahalli's existing demand, as estimated by the Karnataka water policy, is 2.26 mld for its 38,000 residents. Once the second phase of this water treatment project is completed, more than 22% (0.6 mld) of its daily demand can be met by treated water alone, said S Vishwanath, a trustee at Biome Environmental Trust who is working with the town officials and the community to set up an integrated water treatment system using lakes, wells, and a water treatment plant.

PICK OF THE DAY

But are residents willing to drink treated wastewater? Vishwanath vouches for the quality. "Apart from the water treatment plant, the system is equipped with a 130-micron disc filter, a multimedia filter with activated carbon, ultraviolet disinfection, and an online chlorinator to treat the wastewater before it is integrated into the water supply system. The WTP ensures compliance of treated water with BIS 10500 (drinking water) standards," he said, adding that "the quality is such that residents may choose to drink it if they wish to".

Not just in Devanahalli, borewells going dry is a common problem across urban India. With time, traditional means of conserving water using wells, stepwells, ponds, and wetlands have been forgotten. Most of these are lost to real estate or have become garbage dumps. Relentless pumping of water from bore wells, leading to drying up the groundwater reserves, has become the norm. Further, an increase in paved surfaces has meant less water percolates into the ground, affecting natural recharge.

Saswat Bandyopadhyay, an academic working on climate resilient infrastructure, said the situation has worsened because of the climate crisis as rainfall has become erratic but intense. "We now have had times when we see 10-17 inches of rainfall within a day and due to lack of ponds, water bodies, and empty lands, the water cannot percolate. The water is wasted as run-off leading to urban floods and eventually gets flushed out of the city," he explained. He added that globally, there is a rethink in city design to accommodate this excess water by creating new space for blue and green infrastructure following the concept of sponge cities.

Sustainability experts have for long stressed the need for efficient reuse of water to reduce demand for freshwater, a scarce resource. The Union government's Swachh Bharat Mission and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (Amrut) are especially focused on this approach, emphasising wastewater reuse to meet 20% of water needs in Indian cities.

D Thara, additional secretary at the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs said that under Amrut, ₹32,456 crore has been allocated to expand and upgrade wastewater treatment infrastructure, against which 232 projects worth ₹18,248 crore have been completed. These include the addition of 3,685 mld of sewage treatment capacity and another 2,546 mld treatment capacity, which is in the process of being added. "The reduction of untreated wastewater discharge into natural water bodies and systems constitutes a pivotal element in ensuring urban water security and preventing contamination of surface water sources," she said. Under Amrut 2.0, launched in 2021, another 526 sewerage and septage management projects worth ₹50,537 crore have been approved.

Hope for Delhi?

As early as 2012, Delhi considered using treated wastewater to augment its potable water supply. Although the project is yet to take off, some efforts to conserve groundwater have paid off. In March, the Central Ground Water Board found that the amount of water extracted was less than the recharge in the financial year 2021-22 for the first time in 10 years. Ankit Srivastava, a consultant with the Delhi Jal Board until recently, believes that the situation will improve considerably.

He said many projects — where treated water will be used for multiple purposes and, in turn, reduce groundwater use — are in their last phase. These include around eight lake rejuvenation projects, which will improve the water table of those areas. "Pappan Kalan Lake in Dwarka was commissioned around one and a half years back, but in this short period, the groundwater level has increased by 12 metres to 8 metres below the ground from 20 metres below the ground. Even the area surrounding the Rohini lake, fed treated water, has seen a major improvement with the groundwater available just two metres below the ground."

Amid erratic rainfall, water is wasted as run-off. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

He added that DJB has started laying pipelines to transport treated wastewater to farmhouses, parks, and other horticultural and industrial purposes. "Around 25% of the treated water is reused, but within the next one to two months, it will go up to around 35%."

As in Devanahalli, Chennai has started to supply treated sewage blended with freshwater to households on a small scale this August. TG Vinay, managing director of Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, said, "We release the treated sewage into Porur lake. Then the treated sewage of 3-4 mld mixed with rainwater is supplied to households after another round of treatment." Experts from IIT-Madras are currently monitoring the water quality of this treated water.

Besides this, the water board supplies around 68 mld of treated sewage to industries. Another 20 mld of sewage treatment capacity will be added to the city in six months. The city will supply water to the Indian Railways and other private industrial players, another official said. He added: "By reusing this treated water, we are saving water that can now be used for domestic supply and reduce groundwater extraction."

Currently, Chennai reuses less than 10% of its total treated sewage. However, wastewater reuse is much better in Surat, where more than 30% of the treated sewage is re-purposed for horticultural and industrial purposes.

Surat has 11 sewage treatment plants through which around 1,000 mld of treated sewage is released, of which 30% is being reused. "Out of the 330 mld, 115 is industrial-grade water for dying and other textile processing units. The rest of the water is used for gardens and agriculture," said Bhairav B Desai, executive engineer at the Surat Municipal Corporation. He added that work is underway to increase the reuse of water further. He said the city and the state government are talking with private companies that partially need treated water to fund newer sewage treatment plants. "By 2035, we aim to utilise 100% of the treated sewage."

Why does a relatively smaller city such as Surat or even a smaller town like Devanahalli fare better at water efficiency?

Veena Srinivasan, executive director at Water, Environment, Land and Livelihoods (WELL) Labs, thinks that the lack of coordination among government departments and the lack of incentive alignment is a major hindrance. "Often, the municipal body has no additional incentive to store the collected rainwater efficiently," she pointed out while stating water utilities earn fees to distribute water to households. Still, there is no significant incentive to treat their sewage even though it is part of their mandate. "Often the only time there is an emphasis to treat sewage is when the National Green Tribunal takes notice and warns that they will be fined," she added.

"This is why currently reuse of water is more successful where there is an active involvement of industries that can benefit from using the treated wastewater and they have no other water source," she said.

The filled lakes in Devanahalli, other than ensuring piped water supply, also help recharge the shallow aquifers in the area, which will help the town meet its water needs through shallow aquifers rather than deep borewells. "Energy used in pumping is now considerably reduced by a factor of 7 per kilolitre of water, thus reducing the cost of water and reducing carbon emissions," Vishwanath said.

Aquifers are water pockets below the ground that are often connected with other such formations and act as vital underground reservoirs storing rainwater and surface water run-off that percolate through the ground.

Widespread problem

Not just these cities, almost all urban settlements in India, big or small, have been facing water shortages for years with no offered remedy as the population rises every year. In March, the United Nations, in its 'World Water Development Report 2023' report, noted that Indian city dwellers will be the most severely affected as the global urban population facing water scarcity is projected to increase from 933 million in 2016 to 1.7–2.4 billion people in 2050.

However, the successful project in Devanahalli shows that managing and reviving shallow aquifers could help solve the existing water crisis in Indian cities. This is because not only does the cost of water become cheaper, but they can also be readily recharged with rainwater and surface water compared to deep-lying groundwater extracted through borewells.

To bring aquifer management to the forefront of policy dialogue, the ministry of housing and urban affairs is giving ₹20 lakh each to 10 Indian cities to implement projects that work as a model for mainstreaming recharging shallow aquifer management (SAM) under the Amrut 2.0 scheme. All these model projects will be realised by March 2024.

Pune is among the 10 cities chosen for the SAM pilot, where the watershed of the Harantale lake will be redeveloped to increase the groundwater recharge potential of the area artificially. For this, the lake will be de-silted to increase the water holding and percolation capacity. Among other proposed works a rainwater harvesting pond will be dug to capture around 2,000 cubic metres of rainwater by the side of the lake. Further, a plan is to create continuous contour trenches to arrest surface run-off and prevent solid contaminants from entering the lake body.

In Jaipur, one of the 10 SAM cities, an existing dilapidated stepwell — Juht Ki Bawdi — is set to be repaired and restored. At first, the site will be repaired, the existing structure restored, and then the current site will be disinfected after the currently lying water is thrown away. A barrier will also be placed to prevent solid waste from entering the step well before it is again used.

These are among the plans highlighted in a handbook compiled by the National Institute of Urban Affairs which will act as a guide to cities for taking up projects like this.

Millennium Post- 29- December-2023

Satluj-Yamuna Link row: Punjab reiterates 'no water to spare', Haryana CM insists on canal construction

SWATI MAHAJAN

CHANDIGARH: Chief Ministers of Haryana and Punjab under the chairmanship of Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat hold a meeting on Satluj-Yamuna Link (SYL) in Chandigarh on Thursday.

While the CMs of both the states accepted that there was acute water shortage, however, the meeting ended without any resolution.

Shekhawat expressed concern over the diminishing groundwater levels in both states and emphasised on the necessity for concerted efforts to address this concern.

(From left) Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann, Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar PIC/MPOST

Haryana shared the success of its implementation of the micro-irrigation system, and the Union minister urged the state of Punjab to draw inspiration from and actively promote the adoption of micro-irrigation practices.

During the meeting, Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar asserted that the issues of constructing the SYL and distributing water are distinct.

However, he pointed out that Punjab is stuck only on the construction of the SYL issue, whereas we should collectively move forward on this subject.

Khattar highlighted that the Bhakhra Channel, presently in operation for approximately 66-67 years, is ageing, and he underscored the crucial necessity for constructing the SYL to ensure the uninterrupted flow of water in event of any future obstructions in this channel.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the question of constructing the Satluj Yamuna Link (SYL) canal does not arise as the state does not have a single drop of water to share with anyone.

Mann said that the state needs more than 54 MAF water to cater to its irrigational needs. However, Punjab only has around 14 MAF of water.

Deccan Chronicle- 29- December-2023

No surplus water to share: Mann on Satluj-Yamuna Link canal issue

Chandigarh, Dec. 28: Punjab chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday, during a key meeting to discuss the contentious Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal issue, reiterated his state's old stand that there is "no surplus water" to share.

"As a chief minister, I am saying we do not have any water (to share). We apprised Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat about it in the meeting. We are firm on our earlier stand that we do not have water," Mr Mann told reporters after an over hour long meeting on the issue.

Replying to a question, Mr Mann said that Punjab will keep its side before the Supreme Court. "We will file affidavits before the apex court."

The Hindu- 29- December-2023

Water crisis: Atishi writes to Chief Secy. over delay in ammonia treatment plant

Water Minister asks him to submit a report by Jan. 1 stating reasons behind the delay and to ensure that bids for project are invited by Jan. 15, says water treatment at two plants already down by 40%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Water Minister Atishi on Thursday said the delay in setting up a plant to treat high ammonia content present in the Yamuna has impacted the drinking water supply in the capital and directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to ensure that bids are invited for the project by January 15.

In a communication to the officer, the Minister also directed him to submit by January 1 a report stating the reasons behind the delay and give a timeline as to when the in situ ammonia treatment plant will be made functional in Wazirabad.

She asked the officer to personally monitor the project's implementation.

The project was announced earlier this year as high ammonia content prolongs purification process, hitting water production at two treatment plants currently functioning in Wazirabad and Chandrawal.

The presence of ammonia in water prolongs purification process, reducing the production of clean drinking water. FILE PHOTO

After the removal of the toxic substance, the water will be sent to the two treatment plants for further purification, augmenting their output as these would be able to produce more water in less time for drinking purposes, according to an official.

'CM orders ignored'

Ms. Atishi said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had in a meeting of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on March 15 directed to set up the ammonia plant within six months.

She told the Chief Secretary that no progress has been made by the board till now in this regard.

She added that currently the production of clean water at the Wazirabad and Chandrawal treatment plants has dipped by almost 35-40%, resulting in a drinking water crisis.

"This crisis adversely impacted almost one-fourth of the national capital, affecting densely populated areas such as Sadar Bazar, Civil Lines, Old Delhi, Mukherjee Nagar, Burari, Patel Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, Karol Bagh, Majnu Ka Tilla, ISBT, Barafkhana, Bara Hindu Rao, Kamala Nagar, and Roop Nagar," she said. Expressing her disappointment over the DJB's "failure" to implement a key project, she said, "If decisions taken at high-level meetings chaired by the Chief Minister, Ministers-in-charge and the Chief Secretary are not implemented, then it raises serious questions on the government's working machinery."

'Own up responsibility'

Hitting out at the AAP government, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva accused Ms. Atishi and other Ministers of attempting to hide their failures by putting the onus on officers.

"People of Delhi want to know from Ms. Atishi what her party's government has done to clean and preserve the Yamuna. The Yamuna enters Delhi at Palla and till Wazirabad, its water remains clean. Thereafter, dozens of drains flow into it, resulting in an increase in pollutants and ammonia levels," he added.

Punjab Kesri- 29- December-2023

एसवाईएल पर मनोहर-मान में वार्ता फिर बेनतीजा रही

चंडीगढ़, (पंजाब केसरी): हरियाणा के मुख्यमंत्री मनोहर लाल और पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान के बीच गुरुवार को एस वाई एल नहर निर्माण के मुद्दे पर तीसरी वार्ता भी बेनतीजा रही।तीसरी बैठक केंद्रीय जल शक्ति मंत्री गजेंद्र सिंह शेखावत की मोजूदगी में हुई। दशकों से पंजाब और हरियाणा के बीच सतलुज-यमुना लिंक नहर का मुद्दा अनसुलझा है। गुरुवार को चंडीगढ़ में इस मुद्दे पर हरियाणा के सीएम मनोहर लाल और पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान के बीच तीसरी बैठक हुई। पिछली दो बैठकों की तरह यह बैठक भी बेनतीजा रही। पंजाब सरकार इस बात पर अड़ी है कि उसके पास दूसरे राज्यों को देने की खातिर एक बूंद भी पानी नहीं है। वहीं हरियाणा सरकार सुप्रीम कोर्ट के आदेश के अनुसार नहर निर्माण की मांग कर रही है। हरियाणा सरकार का कहना है कि मामला नहर निर्माण का है। पानी के बंटवारे का मुद्दा ट्रिब्यूनल हल करेगा। इस पर पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान का कहना है कि जब पंजाब में पानी नहीं है तो नहर निर्माण से क्या मिलेगा? चंडीगढ़ में आयोजित बैठक की अध्यक्षता केंद्रीय जलशक्ति मंत्री गजेंद्र सिंह शेखावत ने की। इस दौरान दोनों राज्यों के अधिकारी भी मौजूद रहे। बैठक के बाद पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान ने कहा कि हम अपने पुराने रुख पर कायम हैं। पंजाब का 70 फीसदी क्षेत्र डार्क जोन में है। उन्होंने कहा कि जब पंजाब में पानी ही नहीं है तो नहर निर्माण से मिलेगा क्या? उन्होंने कहा कि जब समझौता हुआ था तब पानी अधिक था। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रदेश में पानी की स्थिति सुधारने में लगे हैं।

पुराने रुख पर कायम :मान

बैठक के बाद पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री भगवंत मान ने कहा कि हम अपने पुराने रुख पर कायम हैं। पंजाब का 70 फीसदी क्षेत्र डार्क जोन में है। उन्होंने कहा कि जब पंजाब में पानी ही नहीं है तो नहर निर्माण से मिलेगा क्या? उन्होंने कहा कि जब समझौता हुआ था तब पानी अधिक था। उन्होंने कहा कि प्रदेश में पानी की स्थिति सुधारने में लगे हैं। मान ने यह भी कहा कि पानी की एक बूंद भी पाकिस्तान नहीं जाती है।

हरियाणा से सीखो : मनोहर

श्री मनोहर लाल ने कहा कि एसवाईएल का निर्माण तथा पानी के बंटवारे का विषय अलग अलग है, लेकिन पंजाब केवल एसवाईएल निर्माण के विषय पर अटक गया है, जबकि हमें सामूहिक रूप से इस विषय पर आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। श्री मनोहर ने कहा कि पंजाब को हरियाणा से सीखना चाहिए। वर्तमान में संचालित भाखड़ा चैनल लगभग 66-67 साल पुरानी हो चुकी है, इसलिए भविष्य में किसी कारणवश इस चैनल में कोई अवरोध उत्पन्न होता है तो पानी के सुगम संचालन के लिए भी एसवाईएल का निर्माण अति आवश्यक है।