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The Hindu

Rajasthan Patrika (Hindi)

Deccan Chronicle

Deccan Herald

M.P. Chronicle

Aaj (Hindi)

Indian Nation

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Blitz

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Water dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh aggravated

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 3 JUNE

The Mahanadi river water dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh aggravated further today with Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik today saying that Chhattisgarh has unilaterally shut all gates of Kalma barrage causing distress to downstream areas of Odisha.

In a letter to Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh, Patnaik requested him to open the gates and ensure free flow of water in the Mahanadi river to downstream areas in Jharsuguda district.

Singh in his letter said that the Kalma barrage is one of the six barrages unilaterally taken up by Raman Singh government across the inter-state river Mahanadi without any reference or regard to the interests of Odisha state and its inhabitants.

The decision to stop the flow has affected drinking water needs of the Odisha people. The people of Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Bargarh and many other districts have been affected and there is widespread unrest among them, said Mr Patnaik.



He emphasised that stopping free-flow of water is contrary to the inter-state riparian rights as per the 1945 understanding when the Hirakud Dam was planned.

The Odisha government has already filed a statutory complaint under Section-3 of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act of 1956 and one of the disputes in the complaint specifically refers to six barrages including Kalma barrage.

Odisha has also filed an original suit in the Supreme Court along with Interlocutory Application to restrain Chhattisgarh government from proceeding with the construction of six barrages, including Kalma barrage across Mahanadi.

Chhattisgarh is expected to maintain status quo during pendency of the case, noted Patnaik. It is pertinent to note here that since last year the

Odisha government has been raising the issue with the Centre. The Naveen Patnaik government had drawn flak for having "slept" over the issue for over a decade when Chhattisgarh went ahead with its plan of constructing dams and barrages. In fact the BJD government had underplayed the issue when it was raised in the state Assembly in 2001 and subsequent years. It was only in 2016 that the BJD took to the streets. The Centre is yet to respond to the Odisha governments' petition for a tribunal.

Twice the Union Water Resources Ministry had convened a meeting with the two states and suggested formation of a joint committee to solve the issue. Odisha had rejected the proposal then, demanding stoppage of construction work as a pre-condition to any study/survey or committee.

Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh has held the view that his state was using only 4 per cent of the water in Mahanadi and almost the entire catchment area is in Chhattisgarh. Odisha is using more than 80 per cent of the water, he said.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST CHARGE

Chief of panel that cleared Ken-Betwa link is now govt agency head

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2



Sharad Jain

THREE MONTHS after an expert panel of the Environment Ministry cleared the Ken-Betwa river-link project of the National Water Development Agency (NWDA), the panel's chairman, Sharad Jain, was appointed the director-general of NWDA. Jain pointed out that the Ken-Betwa link project was cleared "long before" his NWDA appointment.

In its first meeting on December 30, 2016, the reconstituted Expert Appraisal Committee for River Valley & Hydroelectric Projects (EAC-RVHP) chaired by Jain, professor at the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, recommended the NWDA's Ken-Betwa river-link project for environmental clearance. Jain was given additional charge as D-G, NWDA, on March 29, 2017.

Calling it a "clear case of conflict of interest", a group of experts and activists wrote to Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday and sought Jain's resignation from the expert appraisal committee (EAC).

"The reconstituted EAC headed by Dr Jain cleared the Ken-Betwa link project, overruling the issues that four earlier meetings of EAC had raised about the project. We have written to the minister for a review of the EAC's decision and (sought) Jain's removal as EAC chairman," said E. A. S. Sarma, a former central government secretary and one of the signatories.

Jain told *The Indian Express*, "To suggest that I was rewarded for clearing a project is ridiculous, as this is anyway an additional charge for which I am not paid. And how can we be faulted for clearing the project in our first meeting? Evaluation is an ongoing process, and every (EAC) meeting builds on the progress made in the previous meetings."

In their letter, the group of ex-

perts and activists referred to the "precedent" when "in 2009, the then chairman of the EAC (RVHP), Dr P Abraham was asked to resign since he was also director of hydropower companies whose projects came before the EAC headed by him" to back their demand for Jain's removal.

"A number of NWDA projects come to EAC for approval. How can one expect that the EAC chairman would be able to objectively, independently and scientifically appraise a project of the organisation of which he is the director-general," asked Himanshu Thakkar of South Asian Network on Dams, Rivers and People.

Dismissing the precedent cited for his removal as "incomparable", Jain said, "You can't compare a private company with NWDA. As far as the issue of conflict of interest goes, no NWDA project has come up before the EAC since my appointment as director-general. When it does, I may abstain from the meeting, or from the discussion on the specific item on agenda."

Jain also rejected the perception of potential bias in experts from government institutions clearing government projects. "If we don't want experts who draw salaries from the government to evaluate government projects, then we cannot allow private experts to assess private projects either. So let's import foreign experts then," he said.

Sarma reiterated that the government should not have appointed Jain as the NWDA-D-G after appointing him EAC chairman.

While top Environment Ministry officials refused to comment on the issue, Jain chaired the EAC meeting as scheduled in Delhi this Tuesday.

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नमामि गंगे प्रोजेक्ट घोटाले की जांच के आदेश

देहरादून, (वार्ता): उत्तराखण्ड के मुख्यमंत्री त्रिवेन्द्र सिंह रावत ने नमामि गंगे परियोजना के अंतर्गत टिहरी वन प्रभाग में 85 लाख रुपये की अनियमितता सम्बंधी खबर का संज्ञान लेते हुए मुख्य सचिव को जांच कर दोषियों के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई करने के निर्देश दिए हैं।

श्री रावत ने कहा कि शासन-प्रशासन में भ्रष्टाचार के प्रति जीरो टॉलरन्स की नीति को कठोरता से लागू किया जाये।

मुख्य सचिव एस. रामास्वामी ने बताया कि प्रमुख वन संरक्षक (पीसीसीएफ) को डीएफओ

टिहरी वन प्रभाग का स्पष्टीकरण प्राप्त कर मामले की जांच के निर्देश दिए गए हैं। गौरतलब है कि नमामि गंगे योजना के तहत केंद्र सरकार ने उत्तराखण्ड वन विभाग को टिहरी बांध के पास सुरक्षा दीवार बनाने के लिए 85 लाख रुपये की राशि आवंटित की थी लेकिन विभाग ने इस राशि का भुगतान किसी फर्म या ठेकेदार को न देकर अलग-अलग लोगों के खाते में जमा करवा दी जिसके बाद मीडिया में खबर आने के बाद मुख्यमंत्री की और से इस बाबत जवाब-तलब किया गया है।

प्रजा
4-6-17