News item/letter/article/editorial published on 10/8/17 in the

Hindustan Times	Nav Bharat Times (Hindi)	M.P.Chronicle
Statesman	Punjab Keshari (Hindi)	A a j (Hindi)
The Times of India (N.D.)	The Hindu	Indian Nation
Indian Express	Rajasthan Patrika (Hindi)	Nai Duniya (Hindi)
Tribune ✓	Deccan Chronicle	The Times of India (A)
Hindustan (Hindi)	Deccan Herald	Blitz

and documented at Bhagirath(English)& Publicity Section, CWC

The overflowing Sutlej river near flood-prone Kawanwali Pattan area in Fazilka. TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Flood alert in Fazilka

OUR CORRESPONDENT

FAZILKA, AUGUST 9

Flood alert has been sounded in Fazilka and officials have been asked to take preventive measures for floods in the district.

Official sources said there was a threat of flash floods in the district till September 30. Sources in the Drainage Department said the release of water had gradually been increasing from the Harike Headworks.

At present, about 22,000 cusecs water is being released from Harike as compared to 3,000 to 4,000 cusecs a few days back following the release of more water from upstream.

The sources said it was likely to increase in the coming days. "There is no threat of floods till the release of more than 50,000 cusecs of water from the Harike Headworks," said Isha Kalia, Deputy Commissioner, Fazilka.

Fazilka is a flood-prone district. The district has to suffer due to the floodwater of other areas. Kalia has directed the officials concerned to make necessary arrangements in flood-prone villages to safeguard the lives of border area people, their livestock and crops.

A control room has also been set up in the Tehsil Complex which would work round the clock. The Deputy Commissioner has also directed officials to identify safer places to shift the affected population in case of floods.

Covering L., YIS

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Water for drinking to be released from Cauvery

Karnataka farmers told not to cultivate paddy, sugarcane

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has decided to release water from the four reservoirs of the Cauvery basin from Thursday to fill up tanks for drinking water purposes. It has strictly told farmers to desist from cultivating paddy and sugarcane, which need a huge quantity of water.

It is for the second time that farmers have been told not to cultivate the water-guzzling crops.

Distress management: CM Siddaramaiah with MLAs and MPs of the Cauvery basin region in Bengaluru • SUDHAKARA JAIN

'Acute shortage'

This decision was taken at a meeting of elected representatives from the Cauvery basin region, convened by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru on Wednesday to discuss the demand by farmers to release water from the reservoirs.

The CM said water would be released from the Krishna Raja Sagar, Hemavati, Harangi and Kabini reservoirs to help increase groundwater level in the wake of concerns that it had gone down to a depth of over 1,000 feet. This would ensure the availability of drinking water, he noted.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said the decision had to be taken in the wake of dire water shortage due to a weak monsoon.

Farmers were free to cultivate rain-fed crops, the Chief Minister said.

"The total storage in all the four Cauvery basin reservoirs is just 45 tmcft now as against 53.52 tmcft during the corresponding period the previous year," he said, describing the situation as the "worst" in the last 46 years.

availability in Punjab and the water required for producing just one crop (rice) shows that Punjab does not have surplus water to share. The gravity of this water crisis can be highlighted by one simple fact that the total water required to produce just one crop (rice) that Punjab produces is significantly higher than the total water resources available in Punjab.

Based on the information available with the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, our estimate is that the quantity of water needed to produce 1 kg of rice in Punjab was 5,389 litres for the triennium ending 2011-12 and 5,337 litres for the triennium ending 2013-14. The total rice output in Punjab in 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 was 11236, 10837, 10542, 11374 and 11267 thousand tonnes, respectively. The total water required, therefore, to produce these quantities of rice works out to be approximately 49.08 MAF (2009-10), 47.34 MAF (2010-11), 45.61 MAF (2011-12), 49.21 MAF (2012-13) and 48.74 MAF (2013-14).

The three sources of water that are accessed to meet this water need are: water available through rainfall, river water through canal irrigation and groundwater through tubewell irrigation. These three sources need to be examined further.

Despite the difficulties in calculating the amount of rain water used for rice cultivation, a reasonably robust estimate can be made. For the years 2010-2014, approximately 82 per cent of the rainfall in Punjab (411.8mm out of the annual 501.4mm) took place between May and September, the months coinciding with the rice season. Based on the assumption that this rainfall took place uniformly on the entire area under rice during those months and using the Food and Agriculture Organisation methods, we arrive at estimates of 9.35 MAF (2009-10), 9.45 MAF (2010-11), 9.40 MAF (2011-12), 9.49 MAF(2012-13) and 9.51 MAF (2013-14) of water available from rainfall though there could be some over-estimation here as rainfall does not take place uniformly. Subtracting these figures from the total water required for rice production, we find that 39.73, 37.89, 36.20, 39.71 and 39.23 MAF more water was required for rice cultivation for these five years (2009-14). This required water was supposed to come from the two remaining sources — rivers and ground basin.

Looking at the river water source first, we find that out of the total average availability of 34.34 MAF, Punjab has been allocated 14.54 MAF of water. We assume here for the sake of demonstrating the force of our calculations and argument that the entire river water allocated to Punjab (14.54 MAF) is used for rice cultivation. This means that the balance of water still required for cultivating rice comes out to be 25.19 MAF (2009-10), 23.35 MAF (2010-11), 21.66 MAF (2011-12), 25.17 MAF (2012-13) and 24.69 MAF (2013-14).

It is crystal clear, therefore, that even if the entire river water is used only for rice cultivation, still every year on an average 24 MAF of water is needed to be supplied from the third remaining source i.e. groundwater. Thus, on an average every year 50 per cent (i.e. 24 MAF of total 48 MAF) of water required for producing rice in Punjab is used by extracting Punjab's groundwater. Punjab uses every year approximately 29603544000000 litres of groundwater to produce rice alone. If we add the other crops such as wheat, sugarcane, maize, fruits and vegetables, the water requirement for Punjab and the stress on Punjab's ground water will be even higher.

According to the Central Ground Water Board data, Punjab has the highest stage of

ground water development of 172 per cent amongst all the states in India. This is a scary index of the ground water status of Punjab. The ground water development stage of 100 per cent indicates that ground water consumption is equal to ground water recharge; ground water development stage of above 100 per cent indicates that the annual ground water consumption is more than the annual ground water recharge. A very high stage of ground water development of 172 per cent indicates that the annual water consumption in Punjab is very high compared to its annual recharge. Rajasthan and Haryana, the two neighbouring states, are placed at a significantly comfortable position with a stage of ground water development of 137 and 133 respectively. The groundwater availability for future irrigation use for Punjab is not only the lowest of all the states; it is, in fact, negative i.e.-14.83 billion cubic meters (bcm) or -12.02 MAF.

In comparison, the condition of Rajasthan, a non-riparian state and still drawing 8 MAF water free of cost from Punjab, is much better in terms of future groundwater availability for irrigation use which is 0.91 bcm (0.73 MAF). Similarly, the groundwater situation of Haryana though negative (-3.31 bcm or -2.68 MAF) is far from the crisis level and is significantly much less when compared with that of Punjab (-14.83 bcm or -12.02 MAF).

Punjab is the only state which is at the immediate door steps of the alarming water crisis. The Goverment of India, irrespective of the political party in power, has never even acknowledged the gravity of this crisis — leave aside any attempt to resolve this crisis. Given the placing of Punjab in India's centralised power structure, all indications are that the Centre is unlikely to be concerned in the future too about Punjab's water crisis unless there is a concerted and collective bargaining power initiative from Punjab.

All the stakeholders in Punjab, irrespective of whether they are aligned with the ruling party, Opposition parties or civil society organisations, must arrive at a consensus that Punjab does not have spare water. This consensus needs to be articulated in a persuasive and patient way and avoiding all together any unfriendly gesture against the farming communities of the neighbouring states who also face multiple problems created by the centralised mode of governance and neglect of rural communities. The recent Supreme Court directive that the SYL canal should be constructed before deciding the quantum of water sharing is unhelpful as this amounts to putting the cart before the horse. The honourable judges need to be persuaded to change their view by presenting before them the incontrovertible empirical evidence that clearly demonstrates that Punjab does not have surplus water. All policy and judicial decisions on river water use must grapple with this grave reality. Ignoring this would be unjust, with aecological and political consequences.

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