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Title : Centre okays Rs 4,000cr for 7 drought-hit states

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The Centre on Monday approved relief assistance of over Rs 4,000 crore for seven drought-affected states from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

The maximum Rs 1,737.65 crore will be released to Tamil Nadu, followed by Rs 1,193.41 crore to Rajasthan, Rs 336.94 crore to Jharkhand, Rs 332.57 crore to Assam, Rs 280.19 crore to Andhra Pradesh, Rs 170.19 crore to Himachal Pradesh and Rs 16.02 crore to Nagaland.

These seven states are part of the 18 affected by drought due to deficit monsoon this year. The other affected states include Maharashtra, MP , UP, Bihar, Odisha, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh.

The decision to release central assistance to these states was taken in a meeting of the high-level committee (HLC), chaired by home minister Rajnath Singh. Finance minister Arun Jaitley and senior officers of the ministries of home, finance and agriculture also attended the meeting.

The decision was taken after examining the proposals based on the report of the central team which visited the states affected by severe drought.

The HLC, so far, has approved over Rs 15,000 crore for drought-affected states. It had earlier approved central assistance for Maharashtra (Rs 3,050 crore), Madhya Pradesh (Rs 2,033 crore), UP (Rs 1,304.52 crore), Odisha (Rs 815 crore), Karnataka (Rs 1,540 crore) and Chhattisgarh (Rs 1,672 crore). Actual relief will, however, depend on how the states disburse these amounts among the affected families. The amount approved for respective states will be given from the NDRF which is meant to provide assistance to states during natural disasters including drought and floods.

This is the second consecutive year when the country faced drought situation. Though the Kharif sown area this year was higher than last year, deficit rainfall will affect the overall output. The situation may further lead to farm distress if the states cannot cope with the deficit during the ongoing Rabi sowing season.



The maximum grant of Rs 1,737 crore will be given to Tamil Nadu

Nod to Art of Living event on Yamuna floodplain was subject to NGT clearance, says DDA



■ Tents and barricades were being erected over 1,000 acres in Yamuna floodplains for Art of Living's World Cultural Festival to be held from March 11-13.

BURHAAN KINU/HT FILE PHOTO

Mallica Joshi

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NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal may have stayed the 35th anniversary celebration of the Art of Living but questions are also being raised about why the event was given permission.

The event is expected to see a congregation of 35 lakh people on a temporary construction done on the Yamuna river bank. The National Green Tribunal, however, does not permit any construction in the area since it is ecologically fragile.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which is in charge of the floodplains, is the authority that gives permission

to hold any event in the area.

"We had told them that we can only give them a no objection certificate for the programme but they will have to get any required permission or clearances from the National Green Tribunal," said a senior DDA official.

Interestingly, the authority had refused permission to Delhi government to host the NH7 festival in the Golden Jubilee Park, which is also located near the river.

At the time DDA had said that the permission was not given since the park was located in the protected zone near the river and such events were banned there.

The Delhi government had

then asked DDA to allow the concert in the Commonwealth Games Village Sports Complex. This, too, was not granted as the 'sports facilities would have been damaged'.

On Monday, however, the DDA said that the permission for the Delhi government event at the Golden Jubilee Park was withheld because it is a park that was not meant for concerts.

"It being in the protected zone was not the reason the permission was withheld. Also, if we gave it out for one function, others would expect the same. We don't allow any such activities in parks or sports facilities. This particular area is barren," the official said.

Dollar burden on Telangana: Govt to pay salaries of foreign engineers, other staffs

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | L VENKAT RAM REDDY

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State to pay foreigners

working on Srisaillam in USD.



File picture of the Srisaillam project.

Hyderabad: The Srisaillam Left Bank Canal tunnel project has imposed a “dollar burden” on the Telangana state government.

The contractors have exerted pressure on the government to approve payment of salaries of foreign engineers and other staff operating imported machinery to dig tunnels in US dollars.

Though no rule is prescribed in the contract, the

government approved the demand, costing the state an additional Rs 26 crore. The project cost was estimated to be Rs 2,850 crore at the time the contract was awarded in 2005 by the Congress government.

The contractors are now demanding an additional Rs 700 crore towards cost escalation, but the government has approved Rs 235 crore, which includes Rs 26 crore in salaries.

“It was approved to prevent further delay in the project. The project was supposed to be completed by 2011 and has already been delayed by over five years. Delay was leading to cost escalation by Rs 100 crore per year.

Instead of wasting this huge amount, the government felt payment of the salaries in dollars and speeding up works which resulted in an excess of only Rs 26 crore was better,” said an irrigation department official. He said the orders to this effect will be issued within a week.

SLBC is considered to be the world’s largest tunnel project conceived by former CM Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy to ensure a permanent solution for the 500 fluoride- hit villages in Nalgonda district by supplying 4,000 cusecs of water through two tunnels of 50.75 km.

While Tunnel-1 extends over 43.9 km, only 30-km stretch has been completed. Work on Tunnel-2 on 7 km stretch is yet to completed. There is still a balance of 40 per cent works which include digging tunnels and construction of balancing reservoir at Udayasamudram.

However, the contractors — JP Associates and US-based firm Robbins Inc stopped work midway in 2015 on the grounds that the contract awarded 10 years ago was not viable due to delay and sought price escalation of `700 crore.

The Robbin Inc, has been seeking payment of salaries for its staff and workers in dollars. With the Rupee weakening against dollar in the last one year, the government has to pay Rs 26 crore in excess over the original contract.

यमुना में अमोनिया फिर बढ़ा, दोनों प्लांट बंद

वरिष्ठ संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली

यमुना में फिर अमोनिया लेवल बढ़ने से चंद्रावल और वजीराबाद वॉटर ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट बंद करना पड़ गया है। हरियाणा के पानीपत ड्रेन से छोड़े गए इंडस्ट्रियल वेस्ट की वजह से यमुना में अमोनिया लेवल नॉर्मल लेवल से काफी हाई हो गया है। इस वजह से प्लांट को बंद करने का फैसला किया गया है। प्लांट बंद होने से दिल्ली में 220 एमजीडी वॉटर प्रोडक्शन की कमी हो सकती है और इसकी वजह से एनडीएमसी एरिया सहित पूरी नॉर्थ दिल्ली में पानी की किल्लत होने वाली है। दिल्ली जल बोर्ड के चेयरमैन कपिल मिश्रा ने बताया कि अमोनिया बढ़ा है और इस समस्या को खत्म करने के लिए हरियाणा अधिस्थिति से बात की जा रही है।

जल बोर्ड का कहना है कि फिलहाल प्लांट बंद कर दिया गया है और इससे सोमवार की सुबह पानी की सप्लाई नहीं होगी। पानीपत ड्रेन से छोड़े गए इंडस्ट्रियल



वेस्ट की वजह से सोमवार को यमुना में अमोनिया बढ़ गया। इसके पहले 19 जनवरी को यमुना में अमोनिया का लेवल बढ़ा था और उन समय भी दो दिनों तक प्लांट बंद रहा था। जानकारों का कहना है कि पानी में अमोनिया लेवल सिर्फ 0.02 परसेंट होना चाहिए।

कैंसर का खतरा : जल बोर्ड का कहना है कि हरियाणा की संबंधित अधिस्थिति

से बात की गई है, लेकिन मंगलवार की सुबह तक पानी की दिक्कत तो रहेगी। उन्होंने कहा कि ड्रेन से इंडस्ट्रियल वेस्ट आता रहा तो समस्या बढ़ सकती है। एक्सपर्ट मानते हैं कि जब पानी में मौजूद अमोनिया के साथ क्लोरीन मिक्स होता है, उससे फ्लोरोएमीन बनता है। इससे कैंसर होने का खतरा रहता है। अगर पानी में अमोनिया की मात्रा बनी रही तो ऐसी

पानी की किल्लत

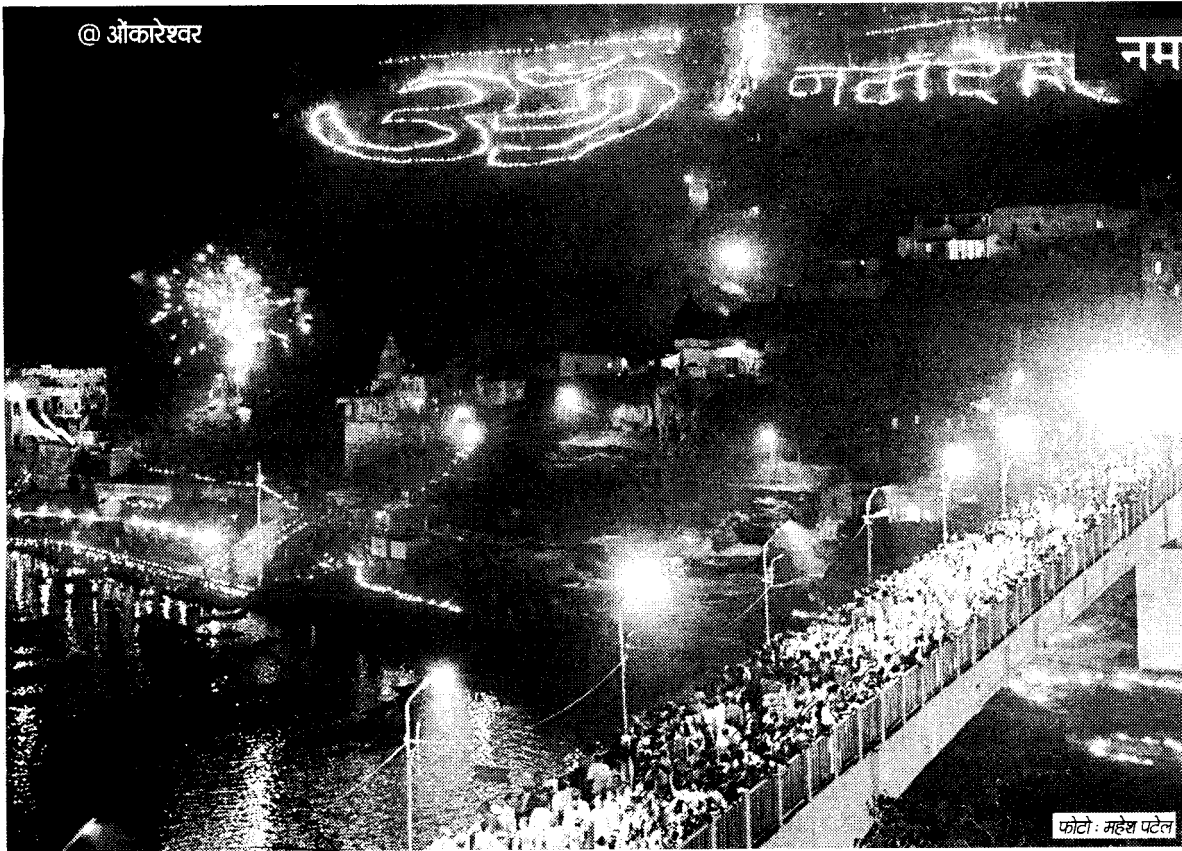
- आज सुबह नहीं होगी पानी की सप्लाई
- एनडीएमसी एरिया सहित पूरी नॉर्थ दिल्ली में हो सकती है किल्लत

परेशानी हो सकती है।

चंद्रावल प्लांट और वजीराबाद प्लांट को मिलाकर 220 एमजीडी की क्षमता है। चंद्रावल प्लांट से राष्ट्रपति भवन, पीएसओ, उपराष्ट्रपति आवास, संसद भवन, सभी सांसदों के घर, इंडिया गेट, कर्नाट प्लेस, सभी दूतावास और एनडीएमसी इलाके में पानी सप्लाई होती है। वजीराबाद वॉटर ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट से पुरानी दिल्ली के इलाके, चांदनी चौक, दरियागंज, अजमेरी गेट, कश्मीरी गेट, मोरी गेट, जामा मस्जिद, चावडी बाजार, सिविल लाइंस सहित कई इलाकों में पानी की सप्लाई होती है।

@ ओंकारेश्वर

नमामि देवी नर्मदे...



फोटो : महेश पटेल

प्रदेश की जीवनदायिनी नदी मां नर्मदा की जयंती मनाई गई। नर्मदा के घाटों पर श्रद्धालुओं का सैलाब उमड़ा। ओंकारेश्वर में एक लाख, महेश्वर में 50 हजार और बड़वाह में 40 हजार भक्तों ने मां नर्मदा का दुग्धाभिषेक कर पूजा- अर्चना की। एक घंटे तक हेलिकॉप्टर से पुष्पवर्षा हुई। रविवार को मां के प्रति भक्तों की आस्था देखते ही बन रही थी।

ओंकारेश्वर

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केन्द्रीय जल आयोग की जगह राष्ट्रीय जल आयोग

सरकार का सतही जल,
भूजल, नदी जल को एक
ढाँचे में लाने का प्रयास

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जल क्षेत्र में सुधारों की बात लम्बे समय से की जाती रही है। केन्द्र सरकार अब उन संगठनों के ढाँचे का पूरी तरह पुनर्गठन करने की प्रक्रिया में है जिन पर जल संसाधनों के उपयोग के लिए बने नियामकों का उत्तरदायित्व है। सरकारी सूत्रों के अनुसार अभी केन्द्रीय जल आयोग (सेन्ट्रल वाटर कमीशन) जिसके पास सिंचाई परियोजनाओं, बाढ़ प्रबंधन और पेजजल आपूर्ति की जिम्मेदारी है और सेन्ट्रल ग्राउंड वाटर बोर्ड (सीजीडब्ल्यूबी) को संभवतः भंग कर उनके स्थान पर राष्ट्रीय जल आयोग का गठित किया जाना प्रस्तावित है। इसके अलावा आकड़े एकत्रित करने और उनका विश्लेषण करने के लिए भी सम्भवतः छोटे संगठन बनाए जा सकते हैं।

जल शोधन यंत्र लगेंगे

अधिकारियों के अनुसार अभी तक भू-जल के प्रबंधन पर पर्याप्त ध्यान

ब्लूप्रिंट की तैयारी

सांगठनिक ढाँचे को पुनर्गठित किए जाने के विचार के पीछे सरकार यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहती है कि देश में सभी जल संसाधन जैसे सतही जल, भू-जल, नदी जल को एक ढाँचे में लाया जाए ताकि वे समग्र रूप से कार्य कर सकें। अलग-अलग नहीं। पूर्व के योजना आयोग के पूर्व सदस्य मिहिर शाह की अध्यक्षता में एक टीम जल संसाधनों के बेहतर प्रबंधन के लिए एक ब्लूप्रिंट भी तैयार कर रही है। संभवतः यह पैनल अगले दो माह में अपनी रिपोर्ट भी सौंप देगा।

नहीं दिया गया है। इसके चलते भू-जल के अंधाधुंध दोहन को बढ़ावा मिला है। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि सरकार का मानना है कि गंगा शुद्धिकरण योजना के तहत जल शोधन यंत्र लगाए जाएंगे जिससे नदियों में पानी की मात्रा तो बढ़ेगी ही, साथ ही सिंचाई और उद्योगों के लिए भी शोधित जल का उपयोग किया जाएगा। ऐसे में नई नीति की जरूरत महसूस की जा रही है।

OPINION, COLUMNISTS



ANITA KATYAL

The author is a Rajpath insider who keeps tabs on the intrigues and conspiracies in the Delhi Durbar. Besides relishing political gup-shup, she is also keen on Bollywood gossip, is a Hindi movie buff, a foodie and a keen walker.

United by Ayodhya, divided on Ganga

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Mr Joshi's public

pronouncement has predictably upset Ms Bharati.



File photo of River ganges. (Photo: PTI)

As fellow travellers in the Ram Mandir movement of the '90s, minister for water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation Uma Bharati and veteran BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi have always shared a close bond.

Nobody can forget the famous photograph of a jubilant Ms Bharati perched atop the shoulders of an equally ecstatic Mr Joshi when the Babri Masjid was torn down on that fateful day in 1992.

However, the two leaders appear to have fallen out now. Ever since he was marginalised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Joshi has criticised the National Democratic Alliance government's flagship programme, Namami Gange, to clean the river waters, handled by Ms Bharati's ministry.

Hitting out at the ruling alliance on every given occasion, Mr Joshi has repeatedly stated that cleaning the Ganga would be a far-fetched dream till there was uninterrupted water flow in the river. Mr Joshi's public pronouncement has predictably upset Ms Bharati.

Although she has not responded publicly to Mr Joshi's remarks, her aides maintain she is furious. Her angry camp followers have spread the word that Mr Joshi has no business making such statements as he was heading the expert committee which had cleared the construction of the controversial Tehri dam saying it would not have any impact on the purity of the Ganga's waters.

Known to be frank and outspoken, Salman Khurshid,

senior Congress leader, has a penchant for getting into trouble with his irreverent comments. He was in the eye of a storm last year when he criticised Mr Narendra Modi in the course of a lecture at the Jinnah Institute in Islamabad. Mr Khurshid had remarked that “Modi is not used to talking to people who disagree with him”, a comment which drew howls of protest back in India.

So when he went for the Karachi Literature Festival last week to launch his latest book, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, it was expected that Mr Khurshid would say something that would grab headlines and generate a heated debate. He was, therefore, asked by well-known Pakistani journalist Mehr Tarar, better known in India as former Union minister Shashi Tharoor’s friend, to refrain from saying anything controversial.

Taking serious note of this request, Mr Khurshid decided to stick to the script, making sure he did not step out of line. A poker-faced Mr Khurshid began his presentation by stating that he will, henceforth, follow the example set by Mahatma Gandhi’s three monkeys. Unfortunately, his tongue-in-cheek comment was lost on the Karachi audience.

Former minister Kamal Nath has been virtually incommunicado ever since he was denied the post of the

leader of the Congress parliamentary party after the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. The Congress leader has been barely seen or heard in the Lok Sabha and has no role in the Congress' organisational matters.

Therefore, it was surprising when party vice-president Rahul Gandhi requisitioned Mr Nath's services to help him defuse the Arunachal Pradesh crisis. While former minister Kapil Sibal was entrusted with the task of handling the legal case being heard in the Supreme Court, Mr Nath was roped in to deal with the rebel legislators who had threatened to join the BJP if their demands were not met.

As a veteran in the game, Mr Nath is among the few senior Congress leaders who can be counted on to handle such situations. While this is being seen as a sign of the return of the Congress old guard, the latest development has also fuelled speculation that Mr Nath may be projected as the party's chief ministerial candidate in Madhya Pradesh.

It has been a virtual ghar wapsi for former minister Manish Tewari, who was recently reinducted into the Congress' panel of spokespersons. Mr Tewari was in the doghouse for the past two years after he refused to contest the Lok Sabha elections.

Though he had been impatient to return to his old job, he was rehabilitated only now with an eye on next year's Punjab Assembly polls. While Mr Tewari must be jubilant over his return, there is a downside to this: He will have to work under his junior, Randeep Singh Surjewala, the head of the party's communications department.