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Hyderabad to get new set of twin reservoirs

Work on the water bodies with 20 tmc ft capacity likely to commence this year

SWATHI VADLAMUDI
HYDERABAD

Work for the next generation of twin reservoirs for Hyderabad's drinking water requirements might commence this year, more than a century after the Osmansagar and Himayatsagar lakes were conceptualised by the legendary engineer M. Visvesvaraya.

While the existing twin reservoirs together can hold 6 tmc ft of water, the future twins are being planned for holding a whopping 20 tmc ft of water each.

One reservoir being planned at Keshavapuram of Shamirpet will draw its water from river Krishna and the other, at Devalammanagar of Choutuppal, will have Godavari as its source, officials from the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HM-WSSB) informed. Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) has already pre-

pared the project report of Keshavpur reservoir.

"We want to commence the work this year, if the government agrees. A total of 1,572 hectares will have to be acquired for the Keshavapuram reservoir, of which 1,200 hectares will be private land, and 372 hectares, forest land. We have written to the government with the project details," informed the Managing Director of HMWSSB M. Dana Kishore.

Dissenting voices

The project cost for Keshavapuram reservoir alone is pegged at ₹7,700 crore, which may be borne by the government. If not budgetary allocations, option for payment on annuity mode to private financiers too is being explored, Mr. Dana Kishore informed. Requiring three years for completion, the two will be able to provide 750 million litres of

water per day (MLD) to the city. Dissenting voices are being heard against the mega reservoirs, as they are feared to lead to replacement of the GO 111, which prohibits high-rise constructions in the catchment areas of Osmansagar and Himayatsagar. The city as of now is being supplied with 372 million gallons of water per day (MGD) – which amounts to 1,691 MLD – almost entirely from the Krishna three phases and Godavari Phase-I. Forty more MGD (182 MLD) of water is scheduled to be supplied to the peripheral areas once the pipeline laying works are complete. There is enough capacity to store 40 TMC of water which is not being fully exploited as of now.

"Water can be pumped into the existing reservoir at Singur, which as of now, receives water only through rainfall. What is the need for the new reservoirs now?"

questions an official under the condition of anonymity. Further, pumping expenditure will be huge, as against the supply through gravity from the existing twin reservoirs.

"Water from Gandipet costs ₹3 per kilo litre, while from Godavari, it costs ₹45 per KL," he says.

However, Mr. Dana Kishore justifies the decision saying the reservoirs are being planned 30-40 years ahead of time, keeping in view the future drinking water requirements.

"There is no link between GO 111 and the new reservoirs. Osmansagar and Himayatsagar reservoirs are no match to these two in storage. They are being built exclusively for year-long storage, in the event of Krishna and Godavari going dry during drought years, and the reserves in Nagarjunasagar depleting," Mr. Dana Kishore says.

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Of Varanasi dhobis and unfulfilled promises

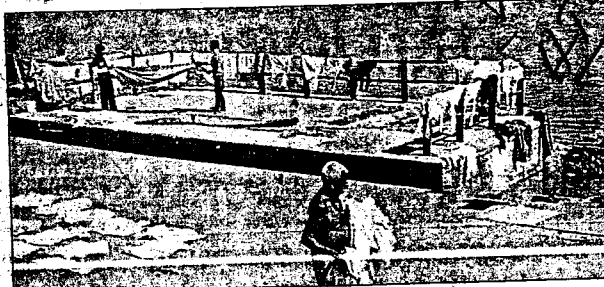
B Vijay Murty

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VARANASI: Munilal Kannaujia has spent most part of his life on the ghats of Ganga washing clothes. At 86, he still gets up at 4am, carries the bundle of dirty clothes of his customers on his head to the Raja Harishchandra ghat and spends nearly eight hours washing, drying and arranging the linen in bundles.

Ask him whether he is concerned about the pollution in Ganga and that he is contributing to the pollution, the old man innocently shakes his head in affirmation. "But where shall we go," he quickly exhorts. "We are ready to move, but where is the alternative arrangement? The government has only been making hollow promises for the last six-seven years," says the old man.

Like Munilal, there are at least 500 washer men and women who wash tons of dirty linen in the



• Clothes being dried at Harishchandra ghat in Varansi. PARWAZ KHAN/N

river every day adding to its pollution.

The Kannaujia's are a miniscule washer men community in Varanasi with approximately 35,000 voter strength, whose lives have revolved around the ghats of the holy river since ages. However, ever since local MP and PM Narendra Modi Clean Ganga action plan has picked up pace, the community leaders claim their survival is under threat.

Rapped by the National Green

Tribunal for the 'lackadaisical approach in dealing with issues concerning pollution in Ganga', authorities have started wielding their baton driving away the washer men from the ghats, but not all are ready to move.

With polls around, the community leaders have started bargaining with parties to fulfil their demands against their votes. Though traditionally BJP voters, the Kannaujia's say, they cannot be taken for granted this time.

"Hum log na ghar ke rahe na ghaat ke" (We neither have a house nor the ghat anymore), retorted the community leader, Nandu Kannaujia, whose organisation, Dhobi Ghaat Bachao Samity has been fighting for appropriate washing centres for relocating from the Ganga ghats.

In the ongoing tussle, it's the holy river that is suffering the most. Union minister of state for water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation Vijay Goel in a written reply in Lok Sabha last month said, "The Centre is aware that the detergents used by washer men along the bank of the river releases phosphate and thereby increases the level of pollution in Ganga."

He added construction of "dhobi ghats" is included in the schemes under the entry level activities of Namami Gange so that the waste water is diverted away and does not flow into river Ganga.

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Smoke on the water

Weak official response to the pollution of Bengaluru's wetlands threatens public health

The extraordinary sight of smoke rising from Bengaluru on fire, with a massive plume of smoke that could be seen from afar, is a warning sign that urban environments are crashing under the weight of official indifference. If wetlands are the kidneys of the cities, as scientists like to describe them, Karnataka's capital city has entered a phase of chronic failure. No longer the city of lakes and famed gardens, it has lost an estimated 79% of water bodies and 80% of its tree cover from the baseline year of 1973. Successive governments in the State have ignored the rampant encroachment of lake beds and catchment areas for commercial exploitation, and the pollution caused by sewage, industrial effluents and garbage, which contributed to the blaze on Bellandur lake. The neglect is deliberate, since some of the finest urban ecologists in the city have been warning that government inaction is turning Bengaluru into an unliveable mess. It is time the State government took note of the several expert recommendations that have been made, including those of the Centre for Ecological Sciences of the Indian Institute of Science. The priority, clearly, is to end pollution outfalls into the water bodies, which will help revive them to an acceptable state of health. Identifying all surviving wetlands and demarcating them using digital and physical mapping will help communities monitor encroachments, while removal of land-grabbers and restoration of interconnecting channels is crucial to avoid future flooding events.

Loss of natural wetlands is an ongoing catastrophe in India. A decade ago, when the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History released a conservation atlas for all States using space applications, it reported the tragic fact that 38% of wetlands had already been lost nationally; and shockingly, in some districts only 12% survived. The Centre has since issued rules for conservation and management, and chosen 115 water bodies in 24 States for protection support, but this is obviously too little. Moreover, research studies show that the concentration of heavy metals in such sites is leading to bioaccumulation, thus entering the plants and animals that ultimately form part of people's food. It should worry not just Bengaluru's residents, for instance, that soil scientists have found higher levels of cadmium in green vegetables grown using water from Bellandur. More broadly, the collapse of environmental management because of multiple, disjointed agencies achieving little collectively and legal protections remaining unimplemented pose a serious threat to public health. Every city needs a single lake protection authority. India's worsening air quality is now well documented, and most of its wetlands are severely polluted. Citizens must assert themselves to stop this perilous course.

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Rajasthan losing lake wealth

YASH GOYAL IN JAIPUR

Put on fast-track of industrial expansion, the state govt has not been able to do much about what Rajasthan needs most: Water.

Almost all water bodies, including lakes, have become highly polluted. The MPs, who can do much on the water front, have failed to utilize their development funds

ARE you in romance with the sand dunes of Rajasthan, or in love with the state's desert beauty, the fort palaces caressed by moonlight on the present grimness of it. A Centre for Science and Environment warns of rising crimes related to environment, prompting director-general Sunita Narain to assert that "we need to move away from the polluted model that has pushed us to the brink."

There are two key parameters to assess Rajasthan's development: one is its economic status that is portrayed as good. Another is the environment status. The state government, led by BJP's Vasundhara Raje, credits itself for having emerged out of the category of the 'sick' states. The Department of Industrial Policy Promotion along with the World Bank placed Rajasthan on 8th place in the Ease of Doing Business ranking.

The big debate is on the environmental status: is Rajasthan facing an environmental and population pressures intensifying man and animal conflict?

Rajasthan has barely 1.16% of the water resources of the country. The average rainfall ranges from 150 mm in its western part to 900 mm in the east. The erratic rain caused drought or scarcity-like situation every year in various parts of the state. Agriculture production to a great extent is critically dependent on vagaries of the monsoon. Worse, groundwater resources are depleting fast and turning the land into dark zones.

The CSE study points to the crime figures: environmental crimes in the country registered a 12% decline in 2014 and 2015, but Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh accounted for 75% of such cases. Under various laws, 2,074 environment-related offences were committed

in Rajasthan in which 2,361 people were arrested in the state. In Uttar Pradesh there were 1,779 cases and 2,966 people were arrested under similar laws.

Sunita Narain says the lessons of the past two years are that environmental issues cannot be ignored because life and health have to be secured.

Begin it with water

Three of Rajasthan's most popular lakes - Jal Mahal, Jaisamand, and Udipur - are among the most severely polluted water bodies in the country. Almost all water bodies of Udipur, popularly called the 'City of Lakes', are highly polluted and encroached upon. The condition of Pichola Lake is symptomatic of the ills that plague the lakes and rivers of the city.

Once an important source of drinking water, the lake today is surrounded by 55 raw sewage inlet points that carry untreated effluents from over 3,500 industries. The city's lake are also choking due to siltation. This is in spite of the fact that the state government has earmarked a budgetary support of Rs. 157.61 crore for water harvesting and plantation in 17 districts. Water resource projects worth over Rs. 12,000 crore, too, are in the pipeline.

Desert & MP funds

Under the 'land desertification category', 26 out of 29 states have reported an increase in the area undergoing desertification in the last decade. Rajasthan has got 62.9% area under desertification. People's parliament representatives from Rajasthan have spent only 31.95 % of their local area development fund out of a budgetary provision of Rs. 375 crore.

In Rajasthan, 13 of 25 Lok Sabha MPs have not adopted a village, while 9 out of 10 Rajya Sabha MPs did not care at all. Only Himachal Pradesh has managed to meet more than 85% of its soil health card (SHC) distribution targets.

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NGT slaps Rs 10L fine on water bottling unit in Noida

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 19 February

The National Green Tribunal has imposed an environment compensation of Rs 10 lakhs on a Noida-based water bottling unit for extracting groundwater without requisite permission since 2009.

A bench headed by Justice Jawad Rahim also ordered a joint inspection of Beltek Canadian Water Ltd by the Central Pollution Control Board and the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board to ascertain the exact number of tubewells installed at the unit and the quantity of water extracted by the firm.

The green panel directed the inspection team to specify the quantity of the water extracted, the nature of pollutants discharged from the factory and whether the area is over-exploited.

20 The team should also find out whether the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) had given permission to the unit, it said. "Considering the allegation and with certain aspects not in dispute that they are utilising the groundwater since 2009, we direct the industry to deposit a sum of Rs 10 lakhs with the CGWA. "This will be subject to determination of the amount of environmental compensation, if any, on final adjudication. The amount shall be deposited within a period of one week. Upon such deposit the inspection shall be conducted," the bench said.

The tribunal, which stopped short of ordering closure of the unit, passed the order after perusing an inspection report filed by the CGWA which said that the plant has been extracting water without installation of meter.

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Clean Ganga project hurts livelihoods, divides communities

DEEPTIMANTI WARY
KANPUR, FEBRUARY 17

THE NAMAMI Ganga Project has hurt leather workshop owner Aqueel Ahmed, 27. His earnings have dwindled with the crackdown on factories polluting the river in Kanpur's Jajmau area. A kilometre away, priest Ramesh Prasad Tiwari, 63, has a different take. He is happy with the project for completely opposite reasons. Tiwari's earnings have plummeted due to increasing pollution in the river. He hopes that a cleaner Ganga would attract greater footfall at his temple on the river banks and boost his earnings. The contrasting views are symptomatic of how the Rs 20,000-crore project has divided communities, something that is likely to be reflected in voting patterns on Sunday.

Ahmed supports the project but not at the cost of his livelihood. "I have seen much cleaner water and would love to have that back. But how is it being done. By killing the small leather businessmen," he said. "I do not have the capital to set up an industrial effluent processing plant." He said that the government was punishing them by pushing them out of business.

The leather units are now required to first treat their effluent in primary treatment plants before releasing them to the government's pumping stations for further cleaning. The decrease in demand for Indian leather abroad had since 2014 hit the industry. Suspension of work during festivals to ensure a cleaner Ganga and cow vigilantism, which has led to closure of several abattoirs and brought raw hide supply to half, have made things worse. This has led to closure of many tanneries in Jajmau, the hub of Kanpur's leather industry. Many tannery owners are facing cases for polluting the Ganga.

Ahmed's work has gone down significantly. "My father was a labourer in one of these factories. We rose from there to set up a small unit. The way things are going, I will



Heyday of tanneries: Namami Ganga has 'killed' industry, say stakeholders.

File

have to go back to being a labourer." Tiwari is nostalgic. "The water was so clear that we would just drink it. So many people used to come here to make offerings," he said. "This (polluted) water turns silver anklets yellow and the white marble Shivling has turned black. Why will people come here?" He hopes Prime Minister Narendra Modi would bring back the Ganga and his fortunes to life. "Earlier, the water would be sticky. Now you can see some fish too."

Tannery worker Jitendra Kumar, 21, wants clean Ganga and closure of abattoirs that the BJP has promised even if it means further downfall of the industry. "There is less work. Muslims and Biharis have flooded the workforce and brought down wages," said Kumar, a Mallah. "Let the government shift these industries. I do not mind losing this job. It anyway gets me little."

Mallahs, an OBC caste, and Brahmins

once dominated Ganga ghats. The leather industry over the years has drawn large number of Muslims and Dalits to Jajmau industrial area that is divided into two constituencies; the BJP represents both.

But Abdul Rehman, a leather unit owner, believes things could change this time. "Muslims are in majority here but their votes get divided. This time there is the (Congress-Samajwadi Party) alliance and BSP. (Chief Minister) Akhilesh Yadav has done a lot of work and is popular. Most people in the community say they will go with alliance," said Rehman, whose leather polishing work too has suffered. "There have been no orders... the Modi government seems only concerned about the river and people on its banks. A few months ago, they were measuring distance between the banks and Muslim settlements. We fear if they come to power, they will demolish half the colony."