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Delhi, Haryana told to settle Yamuna row

SC Tells Chief Secys To Meet With Centre

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New Delhi: Taking exception to chief secretaries of Delhi and Haryana blaming each other for the ongoing dispute on sharing of Yamuna waters, the Supreme Court on Monday directed them to sit together with secretary of Water Resources Ministry of Centre to sort out their differences.

In compliance of the apex court's order, chief secretaries of the two states personally appeared before a bench of Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta and raised their grievances of water-sharing and their differences on the minutes of a meeting held earlier.

Additional solicitor general A N S Nadkarni, appearing for the Centre, also raised objection to failure of two top bureaucrats of the states to amicably resolve their differences and pleaded the court to grant them another opportunity to sit together to sort out the issue. "They should have sorted out them-

Haryana assures supply till May 15

Haryana government officials have assured that the water supply obligations would be met till May 15, in compliance with the Supreme Court order to sort out the water sharing issues. However, the status beyond that still remains unclear, DJB vice-chairman and AAP MLA from Sangam Vihar, Dinesh Mohania, told TOI.

"Haryana CS told us that they are committed for the water supply, as per the quota, till May 15 and after that they will reconsider the matter. But that will be the peak time, when demand will be highest," Mohania said. DJB officials asked the chief secretary to keep the status quo till monsoons but so far no commitment was made. "The top bureaucrat told us that he did not have the mandate to give such assurances. May be the decision needs a political backing," Mohania added. TNN

ves instead of making allegations in court. They should sit together and sort out the problem," he said.

The ASG said the chief secretaries can sit with Union water resources secretary to sort out dispute on Yamuna water-sharing. Agreeing with the ASG's proposal, the court asked them to sit together and talk in a "cordial" atmosphere and come out with an amicable solution by April 27.

The Haryana government also assured the court that it would continue to supply water to the national

capital and the amount of water would not be reduced till the next date of hearing on April 27.

The court was hearing a plea filed by Delhi Jal Board accusing the Haryana government of disobeying the apex court's 1996 order directing the state to release 450 cusecs of Yamuna water daily to Delhi for drinking purposes. The Board told the bench that Delhi was facing an acute water crisis owing to shortage in supply of water by Haryana and pleaded the court to intervene.

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'Cooperation can resolve Mahanadi dispute'

Experts urge warring Odisha, Chhattisgarh to discuss contentious issues

STAFF REPORTER
SAMBALPUR

With the dispute over Mahanadi river water sharing between Odisha and Chhattisgarh reaching a flashpoint, experts and civil society groups have urged the two governments to discuss all the contentious issues for a meaningful solution.

At the second Odisha river conference, which concluded on Monday, experts said competitive politics over the Mahanadi water sharing was only making the matter complicated.

A group of civil society organisations, river and water experts and academics from across the country and the two States gathered here to build an Inter-State Coopera-

tion Framework for the resolution of the Mahanadi river water dispute.

Politics over conflicts

"There have been a lot of politics and inter-State river water conflicts in the country. But in the process of fighting, let the rights of the river as an ecological entity not get snatched. While the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh is rife, it is unfortunate that both the States are treating the Mahanadi as a commodity and not a natural resource," said Ranjan Panda, the convenor of Water Initiatives Odisha.

"No doubt Chhattisgarh has constructed many dams and barrages without the consent of Odisha and has

obstructed a lot of water, but that does not mean we can conclude that Chhattisgarh has siphoned off water from Odisha's share," said Mr. Panda.

"We need a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the impacts of all these structures and availability of water in the basin. Let the tribunal decide how to make such an analysis and instruct Chhattisgarh to stop these obstructions if they are illegal," Mr. Panda said, urging the two States not to close the door on dialogue.

Internationally renowned climate change expert Saroj Dash hoped good sense would prevail and the two States would climb down from their stand and make

space for dialogue. "The premise for the discussion should be cooperation, not conflict," Mr. Dash said.

"We don't need either Odisha-centric or Chhattisgarh-centric approach. People's rights on the river should be the guiding principle for dialogue," said Premananda Panda, an academic.

Mahanadi, the sixth largest river in India, originates from Chhattisgarh and enters the Bay of Bengal travelling 851 km, of which 357 km lies in Chhattisgarh and 494 km in Odisha. Odisha has been grumbling that the Mahanadi is witnessing an 80% reduction of water flow in non-monsoon months while Chhattisgarh says it is only storing river water.

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SC tells Delhi, Haryana to hold fresh meeting on water issue

Tug of war between states over Yamuna water supply

IAN S
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Monday asked Chief Secretaries of Delhi and Haryana to hold fresh meeting with the Union Water Resources Secretary in "cordial atmosphere" to discuss the issues relating to the supply of Yamuna river water here.

Justice Madan B. Lokur and Justice Deepak Gupta asked the Chief Secretaries, present in court, to hold the meeting on Monday itself on the issue of water sharing between the states and posted the matter's next hearing on April 27.

On April 19, the bench had sought the presence of the Chief Secretaries of Delhi and Haryana, after it was told by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) that it has not been receiving sufficient

water from Haryana.

During the hearing, the Chief Secretaries of both the states were present in court and said a meeting was held but raised the issue on the minutes of meeting.

Delhi's Chief Secretary told the court that they had not agreed on the aspect

of withdrawal of cases filed by the Delhi government against Haryana on the water issue but it was recorded in the minutes that the issue was agreed upon.

The Chief Secretary of Haryana said the minutes of the last meeting were

correctly recorded.

Hearing the issue, the bench said: "What should be done now? Do we need to have CCTV cameras installed to see what they have said in the meeting? All of them are senior officers. Are we reducing ourselves to this stage?"

Additional Solicitor General N.S. Nadkarni, appearing for the Centre, told the court that both Delhi and Haryana should sort it out and they should have a fresh meeting to deliberate on the issue.

Haryana's Chief Secretary said they had started releasing water to Delhi from April 2 itself and water was being released as per the agreement.

However, Delhi's Chief Secretary said Haryana had reduced the Yamuna water supply to Delhi leading to a severe water crisis in the capital.

With Delhi facing a water shortage, the DJB had moved the Supreme Court seeking directions to Haryana to release adequate water to the Wazirabad reservoir, alleging that one-third of the Yamuna water supply had been reduced.

The petition filed in the apex court sought instructions to Haryana to supply 450 cusecs of potable water daily to Delhi as agreed upon between the states.

Haryana was supplying to Delhi only 330 cusecs of water daily as against 450 cusec per day, the DJB petition said.

"Delhi is in the midst of an acute water crisis owing to stopping of supply of water by Haryana in the Yamuna, which is meant for drinking purposes in Delhi," the plea stated.



ST-24

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यमुना जल विवाद पर बैठक बुलाने के आदेश

नई दिल्ली | एजेसी

24.4

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सोमवार को दिल्ली, हरियाणा व जल संसाधन मंत्रालय के सचिव को बैठक बुलाने के आदेश दिए हैं। शीर्ष कोर्ट ने यमुना के पानी की आपूर्ति दिल्ली में करने से संबंधित मुद्दों को सुलझाने का निर्देश दिया है।

दिल्ली के मुख्य सचिव अंशु प्रकाश ने न्यायमूर्ति मदन बी लोकुर और दीपक गुप्ता की पीठ से कहा कि पिछली बैठक में उनमें कुछ पहलुओं पर सहमति नहीं बनी थी। वहीं, हरियाणा के मुख्य सचिव

ने कहा कि पिछली बैठक का कार्य-विवरण सही ढंग से रिकॉर्ड किया गया था। अतिरिक्त सॉलिसिटर जनरल एएनएस नादकर्णी ने केंद्र की तरफ से पक्ष रखते हुए कहा कि दिल्ली और हरियाणा दोनों को इसे सुलझाना चाहिए।

दिल्ली के मुख्य सचिव ने पीठ को बताया कि पिछली बैठक में दिल्ली सरकार द्वारा इस बाबत हरियाणा के खिलाफ दर्ज मामलों को वापस लेने के पहलू पर उनमें सहमति नहीं बनी थी लेकिन बैठक में यह दर्ज किया गया कि इस मुद्दे पर रजामंदी हो गई है।

24.04.2018

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Strangling the source of Narmada

WILFUL DESTRUCTION The Narmada was once bolstered by seven perennial sources of water feeding into her apart from wetlands. Now, only one remains.

Gayatri Jayaraman

gayatri.jayaraman@hivive.com

How did Amarkantak, a town once lush with perennial rivers, streams, tributaries, wetlands, even swamps, at an elevation of 1,048m, come to be so dry as to now fear forest fires?

Several factors, some of neglect and wilful destruction, have contributed to its drying out, namely: mining, impact to the bauxite substrata, deforestation, construction, sand mining and rampant water pollution. Everything that dries up the source contributes.

The trajectory to poor river health has taken a turn in the last five to six years.

In April 2012, researchers Nidhi Gupta, Pankaj Pandey, Jakir Hussain studied the 'Physico Chemical Evaluation of Narmada river water at Kalghat in Madhya Pradesh'.

The study found Narmada water safe for domestic and irrigation purposes.

In 2014, the Central Pollution Control Board found the Narmada polluted in stretches from Garudeshwar to Bharuch in Gujarat; AND Mandla to Bheda Ghat, and Sethani Ghat to Nemawar in Madhya Pradesh. It noted that utilization of water resources was at a low 23% and that despite over drawing of ground water and salt water incursions, the Narmada, amongst other rivers in peninsular India, had a surplus supply of water.

In 2016, the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) level in the river was found to be 7.1mg (permissible levels are 3mg).

By 2016, with untreated sewage from 52 cities being dumped into the river, Prof Mukesh Katakwar, of the Department of Chemistry, Govt PG College, Pipariya, Hoshangabad, in his study of Narmada river water published in the Interna-

tional Journal of Chemical Studies was observing that the poor Dissolved Oxygen levels (DO) indicated: "The water quality of Narmada river may not be in a position to sustain the aquatic life and not suitable for using domestic purpose".

The more the river water reduced during the non rainy seasons, the greater was its pollution.

The Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board this year began installing real-time water quality testing facilities at Omkareshwar, Bhopal, and 14 locations. While the Water Quality Index Report for Feb 2018 marks the river as 'satisfactory', it omits mentions of MPN index (a measure of bacteriological content) between Narsighur and Nemawar, only discreetly marking it as 'B' category of the bureau of Indian Standards after the confluence of the SPM nallah. Since 2017, the MP government has begun a monthly and annual monitoring of the water in the river.

A fundamental change has been to the temperature of the river according to a January 2017 study by Utpal Bhaumik of the Central Inland Fisheries Institute (since retired). The main cause would appear to be the dams on the river and other developmental projects. The projects and the dams have also affected silt levels. Catchment denudation caused high silt contents in the run-off waters and the river, increasing chloride values increasing in the lower plains (615-3248 ppm) because of the decrease in freshwater discharge from upstream. This would slowly begin to alter the ecological balance of the river. The source holding stable is the last thing keeping the Narmada from complete imbalance. Now, even that is under stress.

The estimation of how much of a river comes from base flow component (the

amount of ground water flowing into a river where the water table intersects the streambed), has many variables. For the Narmada, it is estimated to be 20- to 22%; 60% of it is rain fed. Once there were seven supporting rivers feeding in to the source.

The Narmada first rises out of a spring now housed by a temple known as Mai Ki Bagiya, in Amarkantak.

The river is worshipped 5km away, at the Narmada kund, from where she gushes forth after travelling underground. But untouched by worship or ceremony, the real source of the river lies in a spring that is now a village well.

Now operational only in the monsoons, it used to be a perennial gush of water that split into two streams: the Savitri river, swerving left to what remains now of the algae-ridden Savitri reservoir, before it fed into the Narmada. And the Son, which travelled right. Locals who have filed applications before the NGT have done the groundwork. From applicant Sanjay Tiwari to a retired forest official, Virendra Kumar Mishra, professor of environmental sciences at the neighbouring Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, local sadhus and saint, elders and others, the origins of the other rivers that fed into the source of the Narmada have been mapped and documented for over 20 years, from when it was first warned they were going to dry up.

The Gayatri river is also bound by a brick well marked by a small orange temple. Such was the gush that when S.D. Khare was Secretary (Judicial) to the Government Home Department of the then Rewa, Vindhya Pradesh, in 1952, he erected a dam to contain its waters. The dam still stands, but contains nothing more than a puddle of water. The source of the Kapildhara river, known more by



Remnants of the Gayatri river during summer

the waterfall on the river's course, along with the Arandi river has also disappeared. In the ridge behind the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Corporation's resort, the careless construction of a road has cemented and tarred the site of the natural spring that gave rise to the Amravati river in one direction and the Vaitarni river in the other.

Behind the Narmada kund, where a canal was built to connect the flows of the Savitri and the Gayatri, is a trickle of a gutter, accumulating the residue of the pilgrim influx.

The most thriving source of water, and the only one that now backs up the Narmada, lies within the ASI's Kalachuri temple complex—known locally as 'surya kund' or 'brahma kund'. All the others only come into existence during the monsoons. And these are only the rivers that performing a supporting role to the Narmada, seven more springing from this same town to support the Son, apart from the Johila river, which run in different directions. For the rest of the year ridges in the soil remain to tell their tale.

It's been an environmental battle this town has been fighting since 1986. When KCS Acharya was Chief Secretary of MP in 1985 (to 1988), he filed a comprehensive report of factors impacting the zone, from its jurisdictional divisions to the impact of mining.

On the basis of it, in 2000, Amarkantak was marked as a biosphere reserve, more to attract tourists and buy into the buzz of 'ecotourism' rather than out of any real need to preserve it.

This report also became the basis of Sanjay Tiwari's petition filed to the NGT in 2015. This was followed by...

MAIN CAUSES OF THE MALAISE

Bauxite Mining



A primary cause for the disturbance that KCS Acharya pointed out is bauxite mining, most commonly found in basalt rocks, and a primary raw material for aluminium. In 2014, responding to a petition filed by the Narmada Khand Swabhiman Sena, the NGT observed that landscape plans presented for mining have not been followed.

Construction



Rampant concrete construction and the explosion of population feeding off diminishing resources. Around Independence, the town was home to just above 200 families. Today it is 1,952 households and 8,416 people. According to the MP Tourism department of the 15.05 crore domestic tourists that made it to

Removal of ecosystem



Onkar Goswami was first posted as a young forest officer for ten years in the region in 1982 and again in 2000. In his early stint, he says, he observed that the Narmada were lined with a grass variety known as Moba. Moba is a varietal of coastal grass that is formed out of algae and a type of sea weed that grows

Culling of mother species



Locals tell of a town filled with jamun trees ripe with plump fruit, neem, mango, sal, peepal, and palash. None remain now. With the plantation of mono-cultured forests, two impacts have occurred: one is many planted trees have not survived, and secondly, there are no young trees in the forest, most facing out to



■ Remnants of the Gayatri river during summer.

GAYATRI JAYARAMAN/HT PHOTO

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It is necessary to understand that the river Narmada has a unique position geographically, ecologically and environmentally apart from having an economic impact on the lives of the people of the region

JUSTICE DALEEP SINGH, in his NGT judgment

have been formulated. But report after report of findings have lain unacted, some members claim.

The intended refashioning of Amarkantak into a 'mini smart city' now has locals worried that it will invoke rampant construction and influx without implementation of even prior NGT orders.

To understand the river's decline it is important to go into what has disturbed the source. The man leading the battle charge against the Madhya Pradesh government for over a decade has been Justice Daleep Singh, at the NGT, in response to PILs by concerned social organisations, religious groups, and the ABVP. His judgements are also the only place where the larger picture of minor interdepartmental responsibilities and lapses come into picture. Responding to a combined four petitions on the subject of pollution in the Narmada in November 2017, Justice Singh observed:

"It is necessary to understand that the river Narmada has a unique position geographically, ecologically and environmentally apart from having an economic

impact on the lives of the people of the region. ... the eco-system of the Narmada valley the Vindhyan mountains of Amarkantak which ensures a perennial flow into the river needs to be preserved at all cost so that we ensure the perennial flow of water into the river"

The Narmada basin extends over an area of 98,796 sq. km. The river flows westwards over a length of 1,312 km before draining into the Arabian Sea. The average annual rainfall in the basin is 1178 mm, 90% of which is received during the monsoon months (June to September). Situated in a core earthquake zone, the Narmada lies in a rift valley formed of basaltic flows.

About 32% of the basin is forested, 45% being the net sown area with an average cropping intensity of 135%.

The source sits in a ridge made of basalt rock, which has water retaining properties that it then releases through a drip mechanism. Hence, the town's water table was always high. It has now dropped by 30% at source. In 2017, Madhya Pradesh received 27.69% less than average rainfall affecting 97% of the Narmada's catchment area.

This year has seen the lowest availability of water with the Narmada Control Authority pegging it at 14.66MAF.

Even as Gujarat writes to Madhya Pradesh demanding more water be released as per the water sharing agreement, given that the original agreement didn't take into account future population growth, here's the open secret no one's thought to factor in: governments don't get to decide how much water the river has to give, the river does.