News Links on Water Sector

(11, NOVEMBER 2024)

CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION

MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI

Serving the Nation Since 1945

Why there is an Urgent Need to Promote Sustainable Irrigation Practices

Date: 31/10/2024

India's achievement of self-sufficiency in food production has primarily been driven by the significant expansion in irrigation accompanied by high yielding varieties and input use. The extent of irrigated crop area as a percentage to gross cropped area rose from about 17% in 1950-51 to about 55% in 2022-23 as per the latest land use statistics data released by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture in September 2024.

Nevertheless, nearly half of the existing cultivated area in the country is still under the mercy of erratic monsoons, which frequently result in potential yield and income uncertainties for farmers. In this regard, a research article published in August 23 RBI bulletin indicated that improving irrigation infrastructure could mitigate the adverse impact of deficit monsoons on crop output.

Considering the fact that the scope for further notable expansion in area under cultivation is limited and the crucial role of irrigation in increasing yields, it is imperative to expand irrigation for any further increase in food production in the country. In this regard, it is important to note that India has only 4% of the world's water resources and is home for over 17% of the world's population. Hence, there is an urgent need to devise measures to promote sustainable irrigation practices for efficient and judicious use of irrigation water from both groundwater and surface irrigation sources.

Source: https://thewire.in/agriculture/why-there-is-an-urgent-need-to-promote-sustainable-irrigation-practices

Experts Inspect Polavaram Site as Part of Design Agenda

Date: 06/11/2024

Vijayawada: The Centre has set the ball rolling to ready the roadmap to resume works on Polavaram project with a crucial work in the presence of international experts on Wednesday.
Top officials from Central Water Commission (CWC), Polavaram Project Authority (PPA), AP water resources department, contract agencies were present.

The session will be held for three days in which the experts will also make field inspection to ready the designs.

The meeting is considered very significant as Jal Shakti ministry wanted to finalise the designs for the diaphragm wall and other crucial structures pending in the project.

The experts started their session by visiting Gap-II and Oedometer and Piezocone test locations in the morning. Later, they visited earth work site at right flank and inspected the area of dewatering being done. The officials started discussions in the afternoon session after finishing the field visit.

The Polavaram project works hit a roadblock almost two years ago after the executing agencies found the diaphragm wall getting damaged beyond repairs due to massive flood in 2019 and 2020.

Source: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vijayawada/international-experts-assess-polavaram-project-designs-to-overcome-dam-challenges/articleshow/115026908.cms

Tackling the energy-water challenge at COP29

Date: 06/11/2024

Understanding the energy and water nexus is vital to combating climate change. Global demand for both continues to grow as populations, cities, and incomes expand. Climate change increases rainfall variability, causing more destructive droughts and floods, and affecting hydropower's ability to supply low-emission electricity and stabilize the grid. Climate impacts will boost energy demand for irrigation and desalination, and stress electricity transmission and utility water systems.

At this month's COP29 in Baku, greater attention must be given to the complex relationship between energy and water. The meeting should promote long-term policies, strategies, and investments to meet this challenge.

Hydropower is the world's single-largest source of renewable power. But most clean energy development analyses, including the 2024 World Energy Outlook by the International Energy Agency (IEA), emphasize the role of solar and wind in the energy transition. Their growth over the past decade has indeed been unprecedented; the IEA forecasts that global hydropower generation will be overtaken by solar photovoltaics in 2029 and by wind in 2030. Nevertheless, hydropower still contributes 14 percent of global power generation and 35 percent of the world's non-fossil electricity. Hydropower is widespread in all regions, with 89 countries boasting installed capacity over 1,000 megawatts. Nine countries across four continents depend on hydropower for over 75 percent of their electricity generation, while another fourteen rely on it for more than half.

Source: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/tackling-the-energy-water-challenge-at-cop29/

Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Date: 06/11/2024

Everyone needs clean water, safe toilets, and good hygiene habits to stay healthy, but not everyone has access to these essentials. Today, millions of people around the world do not have clean water to drink, and billions do not have a safe place to go to the bathroom. This can lead to serious illnesses like cholera, typhoid, and diarrhea, which are especially dangerous for infants and children.

Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene remains a significant global challenge, with over 2 billion people lacking clean drinking water at home, 1.5 billion lacking basic sanitation facilities, and 2 billion lacking basic hygiene services.

Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene play a major role in spreading diseases like cholera and typhoid fever. These conditions also contribute to the emergence of more dangerous forms of diseases, such as extensively drug-resistant typhoid fever. Addressing these challenges requires dedicated efforts to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices. These improvements are necessary for preventing the spread of disease and dealing with emerging threats like antibiotic-resistant infections.

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/global-water-sanitation-hygiene/about/index.html

Water is a common good for all, says UN expert

Date: 06/11/2024

“The water that we extract from nature for various uses must be managed as a common good, a shared good that must be accessible to all, but not appropriated by anyone,” said Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

In his report, Arrojo-Agudo frames water as a shared, life-sustaining resource whose management should be the reponsibility of States. States, he added, should adopt a human rights-based approach to managing aquatic ecosystems and the water cycle instead of considering water as a commodity that should be managed according to the logic of the market.

“From a neoliberal perspective […] access, use and benefit from water depend on the ability of each individual to pay, while access to information and management are in the hands of the majority shareholders of the corporations in charge of these services,” he explained. “This not only contradicts the conception of water as a common good but is inconsistent with an approach to water management based on human rights.”

Source: https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/11/water-common-good-all-says-un-expert

Water Economics Review Calls for Valuing Hydrological Cycle as Common Good

Date: 06/11/2024

The Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW) has launched a report redefining the economics of water. The report maps the systemic links of the hydrological cycle to land, climate change, biodiversity loss, and progress on the SDGs. It proposes ways to "re-define and re-value" water to manage the hydrological cycle locally as well as a global common good.

The report is titled, 'The Economics of Water: Valuing the Hydrological Cycle as a Global Common Good.' Warning that the hydrological cycle is out of balance, jeopardizing an equitable and sustainable future for all, it calls for a new economics of water that understands the hydrological cycle's deep interlinkages with climate change and biodiversity loss.

Such an economy will transform water governance at every scale and bring together fundamental economic concepts and tools to value water properly by reflecting its scarcity and the multiple benefits it provides. It will tackle externalities caused by the misuse and pollution of water by shaping economies where water is used efficiently, equitably, and sustainably from the start.

Source: https://sdg.iisd.org/news/water-economics-review-calls-for-valuing-hydrological-cycle-as-common-good/

India, Nepal agree to expedite water resources, energy cooperation

Date: 07/11/2024

Nepal and India have agreed to expedite hydropower projects and advance cooperation on energy, water resources and other key areas, a top minister of the Himalayan nation said on Wednesday (November 6, 2024).

During the visit, which he called "important" and "fruitful", Mr. Khadka met India's Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil and discussed advancing cooperation on energy, water resources and irrigation.

"During the visit, the two sides agreed to expedite the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project and Arun Third hydropower project, among others," said Nabin Raj Singh, Director General of the Department of Electricity Development, who was also part of the delegation led by Khadka.

"The government of India agreed to move forward the Pancheshwar Project, and the Nepalese side agreed to expedite the works relating to land acquisition for the Arun Third Project being developed by an Indian company," he said.

Source: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-nepal-agree-to-expedite-water-resources-energy-cooperation/article68840068.ece

Centre asks Assam to prepare feasibility report on wetlands for flood control

Date: 07/11/2024

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan has asked the Assam government to prepare a detailed feasibility report on 271 wetlands for flood water diversion within December, a senior official said on Thursday.

The project to rejuvenate the wetlands and connect them for flood water storage may cost the state exchequer to the tune of Rs 500 crore, although the final estimate on how many wetlands to be covered will be known after a survey is done, the official stated.

In his two-day visit to Assam, Mohan held a series of review meetings on varied topics such as law and order, border management among Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, flood control measures and the status of various tribal councils.

Source: https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/centre-asks-assam-to-prepare-feasibility-report-on-wetlands-for-flood-control/cid/2061350

Centre against States imposing water cess on hydropower projects: Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar

Date: 07/11/2024

New Delhi: Union Minister of Power and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday said the Power Ministry is not in favour of states imposing water cess in respect of hydropower projects.

He was speaking to media persons in Shimla after reviewing the power and housing ministries activities in Himachal Pradesh.

"The states imposing water cess on hydropower projects to their benefit would be burden to electricity consumers of entire country. The Centre is against imposing water cess. We have already told the states not to impose such cess," he said.

Commenting on the Himachal Pradesh Government move to impose water cess, he said the High Court had quashed such proposal, he said.

The issue became important when the Himachal Pradesh government passed the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Bill in March 2023. But the Himachal Pradesh High Court declared the water cess levied by the state government on hydropower generation as "unconstitutional" after around 40 power-generating companies challenged the state's Water Cess Act in the court.

Source: https://www.deccanherald.com/india/centre-against-states-imposing-water-cess-on-hydropower-projects-power-minister-manohar-lal-khattar-3267125

Fortifying The Future: Ensuring Dam Safety With A Solid Foundation

Date: 08/11/2024

Climate change is stressing large reservoirs, recent failures and near misses are encouraging countries to update their regulatory approaches. A comprehensive risk assessment can help dam owners and operators in identifying, quantifying and managing associated risks, enabling analytically informed decisions and increasing confidence with regulators and insurers.

Dams help to regulate water levels, protect land from flooding, and provide water for drinking, industrial processes and irrigation. They are also commonly used to facilitate navigation and generate hydroelectricity. Dams are of considerable benefit to society, but they are capable of wreaking great destruction should they fail.

Globally there over 200,000 dams. Of these, around 50,000 are above 15m high or store more than 3,000,000 m3 of water and are therefore considered by the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) as large.

The paradigm of a high-risk dam is one which is tall, poorly constructed, operated and maintained, and holds a large volume of water close to a community and infrastructure. In 2023 storm Daniel caused two dams in Libya to fail, killing over 8,000 people and destroying a quarter of the city of Derna.

Photo of damage caused by Derna dam.

Source: https://www.mondaq.com/uk/climate-change/1541772/fortifying-the-future-ensuring-dam-safety-with-a-solid-foundation

Water widens the class divide

Date: 08/11/2024

It has always been a great blemish on democratic South Africa that many of her people are denied the basic right to clean water.

Over the years, the Mail & Guardian has visited several areas where people are bereft of the amenities most of us take for granted. In these places a flowing tap is a luxury too far, necessitating that people sometimes walk for hours to fetch water to drink, cook or bathe with. Their experiences are unfathomable to the city dweller. As just one example, in August we ran an article about Limpopo residents who have to confront crocodiles just to fill up their buckets.

But, the gross inequality notwithstanding, our country has found stability in the clean, consistent supply to urban areas. The tap water in our major cities is — usually without pause for thought — happily imbibed. Such is water's ubiquity that many a Joburger and Capetonian see it as a political statement not to buy bottled water.

Our recent reporting, not to mention the Gauteng crisis staring at us all, makes us worry about that certainty. The trajectory we are on threatens to further divide South Africa along lines of access to the compound that is most critical to our existence.

Source: https://mg.co.za/editorial/2024-11-08-editorial-water-widens-the-class-divide/

The Dam Dilemma: Europe’s Natural Rivers in Crisis

Date: 10/11/2024

Once famous for historic battles, Sutjeska National Park in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a region of mountains and primeval forests on the border with Montenegro. More recently, lawyers have replaced soldiers. The park is now the site of legal battles, where environmental activists endeavor to prevent the construction of new hydropower projects. After ten years of fighting to protect two rivers, they succeeded in stopping construction, but only within the bounds of the national park. Despite outdated licenses and a lack of public consultation, the diggers are back to try their luck further upstream.

The last remaining free-flowing rivers in Europe exist in the Balkans, but they are in danger. Plans to build around 3,000 dams between Slovenia and Greece, along with diversions and urban developments, threaten almost every river in the region (this map shows what that number looks like in practice). Even protected areas are not immune, with around 1,000 of these projects putting vulnerable stretches of the river at risk.

If the plans to build the new hydropower plants go ahead, the impact on biodiversity would be devastating. Critically, the damage does not just take place during construction when diggers cut directly into local habitats. There is also a downstream impact on endangered ecosystems. Water quality, declines in fish and bird populations and the dislocation of sediment are only a few long-term issues. In the worst cases, the harm is irrevocable: about 50 fish species could be faced with global or regional extinction.

Source: https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/the-dam-dilemma-europes-natural-rivers-in-crisis/#