

SARDAR SAROVAR**Drinking water allocations diverted to industries, non drought prone areas**

It seems the worse fears of the critiques of Sardar Sarovar Project are coming true much sooner than expected. It is once again clear that all the propaganda of SSP being for the drought prone areas have been exposes for what it is: just plain propaganda, never meant to be realised.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India in its report for the year ended March 31, 2006, which was tabled in the state assembly on March 30 has criticised the performances Gujarat Water Infrastructure Ltd and Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited. The CAG report pointed out that the performance of GWIL in the implementation of bulk water transmission

projects was found to be deficient in areas such as project planning, financing, implementation and pricing of water and internal control.

GWIL was incorporated in 1999 to implement 13 of the total of 39 sub projects under the main project, involving 811 km out of total of 2700 km project for supply of drinking water from Sardar Sarovar to Saurashtra, Kutch, North Gujarat and Panchmahals. The CAG report said:

- About GWIL: 'Laying of pipeline of larger diameter than specified resulted in unfruitful expenditure of Rs 1.64 crore.'
- "The Company's failure to obtain admissible excise duty exemption resulted in avoidable payment of Rs 1.36 crore."
- "Deviation from the tender specification for wire mesh used in gunniting steel pipes resulted in avoidable expenditure of Rs.1.08 crore."
- "The Company's failure to charge the recommended price for supply of water to industries resulted in loss of potential revenue of Rs.8.10 crore."
- "The Company made excess payments of Rs.49.17 lakh to the contractors towards construction of pump

houses and interest amounting to Rs 51.43 lakh was short recovered on premature payments made to the contractors."

- "Delay in obtaining administrative approval of the Government of Gujarat for award of the work resulted in cost overrun to the extent of Rs 2.71 crore."

In a series of shocking revelations in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for Gujarat (Commercial) for the year ending on March 31, 2006, which was recently tabled in Gujarat Assembly, it has been exposed that the drinking water meant for drought prone areas is being diverted in huge quantities to the non drought prone areas and for industrial use. Moreover, there has been huge increase in allocation for industries, clearly at the expense of irrigation for drought prone areas. All this has been done by the govt without even informing the people of Gujarat what is being done. The game is exposed.

• About SSNNL: "SSNNL incurred liability for payment of price escalation of Rs 6.43 crore due to non adherence to the State Govt instructions for award of work contracts."

• "The Company had double accounted the profit of Rs 2.26 crore on sale of machinery and vehicles in one division and had committed errors of Rs 2.32 crore in computation of profit on sale of building, machineries and vehicles

in another division. This has resulted in overstatement of profit on sale of assets and understatement of incidental expenditure pending capitalisation by Rs 4.58 crore."

Diversion of water from drought areas to Gandhinagar

The CAG report also criticised GWIL that in sub project Narmada Camal-14 executed by GWIL at a cost of Rs 39.39 crores for Gandhinagar, "It was noticed during audit that this sub project was not covered under the master plan. Thus, the implementation of sub project NC-14 resulted in diversion of 255 MLD water meant for supply to the drought prone areas."

Diversion of water from domestic use in drought

areas to industries About water supply to Kutch, the CAG notes, "the master plan for the project had envisaged allocation of 232 MLD for Kutch district, including 45 MLD for industrial use... Scrutiny of industrial connections released/approved by the Company and GWSSB revealed that up to March 2006 the total water allotted for industrial use was 61.91 MLD (the Company : 43.38 MLD and GWSSB : 18.53 MLD) against the stipulated allocation of 45 MLD. The excess allocation of water for industrial use would reduce the

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SSNNL responded to CAG that it had increased (in May 2006) the allocation for industrial water from 0.2 MAF (674 MLD) to 1.0 MAF (3369 MLD) from which the excess allocation would be adjusted. The CAG rejects this, “The reply is not tenable. SSNNL had increased the overall allocation of water for industries but district wise allocation has not yet been finalised (August 2006).”

Here an important question arises, if SSNNL has increased the water allocation for industries to 1.0 MAF, than it has to reduce water allocation for irrigation, but there is no reduction in the proposed command area. Who then, will suffer due to the increased allocation to industries by SSNNL? (CAG Report, Financial Express 310307, Indian Express 030407)

New Rules to force people to take Narmada water A somewhat complementary situation prevails in Ahmedabad. Here, having failed to get many takers for Narmada water connections, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Ahmedabad Urban Development

Authority have launched new ways to induce, pressurize and force people to take up Narmada water Connections.

By way of inducement, the AMC has offered 10% rebate for one time connection charges those who take the connection before March 31. AMC is also saying that with 500 ppm Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), Narmada river water is better from health point of view than borewell water with 1500 ppm TDS or more. However, so far only 55 residential societies have applied for Narmada water connections.

On the other hand in Ahmedabad, having failed to get many takers for Narmada water connections, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority have launched new ways to induce, pressurize and force people to take up Narmada water Connections. This when in the SSP plan, there was no provision for water for Ahmedabad.

By way of pressure, the AMC will be sending out 12 teams across the city to measure TDS in various borewells and the reports will be sent to all over the city and then letters will be sent to respective societies about the TDS level in water in their wells.

By way of force, AMC has from March 21 made it

mandatory for all developers to take Narmada water connection before their building plans can be approved. According to president of Gujarat Institute of Civil Engineering and Architects, this is beyond the powers of AMC as per the Town Planning and Urban Development Act. (The Times of India 200307)