

Press release

India: Decision to raise height of Sardar Sarovar Dam illegal and political conspiracy

Sunday 30 June 2013, by [NAPM](#) (Date first published: 29 June 2012).

Decision to raise height of SSP illegal and political conspiracy Central Authorities cannot permit drowning of 2 lakh population without rehabilitation.

The decision to permit raising of the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam from the present height of 122 mts to the final height of 138.68 mts, as per the news published in the Times of India, has been taken by the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Sub Group of the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) on 26th June. This is supposed to have been done on the basis of the reports by the 4 states, including Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, confirming, that 'rehabilitation is complete'. All this is absolutely unbelievable and unacceptable since there are more than 40,000 families in the 245 villages in the submergence area spread across three states, but the maximum (193) are in Madhya Pradesh alone.

There are at least 4,000 families in M.P. and about 1,000 in Maharashtra who are yet to receive alternative agricultural land as per the eligibility. Thousands of landless including agricultural labourers, fish workers, potters and other artisans are yet to get an alternative source of livelihood as per the state policy and Action Plan, endorsed by the Supreme Court. Those at the resettlement site in Gujarat or Maharashtra or at a very small percentage in M.P. are certainly not rehabilitated, till date, as there are hundreds of families without full land, as per entitlement or amenities, yet to be attained.

When huge corruption through a massive scandal of about 5,00 to 1,000 crores, misappropriated by officials and agents in rehabilitation is under inquiry, by Justice Jha Commission, appointed by the High Court for the past 5 years, there is no way that M.P. can approve the fake rehabilitation. M.P. has allotted land only 21 families till date, that too in the past two months, while 4,000 + remain to attain their due, many of whom are cheated through fake land registries. These include hilly adivasis habited in the Satpuda and Vindhya ranges, who are to be taken special care of as per the policy and judgements. Maharashtra too is still searching and locating land to establish R&R sites, more and Gujarat's oustees are also awaiting declaration, allotment of land and / or amenities in the original villages as well as resettlement sites.

The Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award and all the Supreme Court's judgements, (1991, 2000, 2002, 2005) and the last interim order that has clearly directed full and fair implementation of the NWDTA, are to be violated once again, is there is any raise, in the dam height, at this stage. Flooding the villages, where life is on with pucca houses, shops, markets, schools, temples and mosques and lakhs of trees will be a gross injustice, against law and contempt of court. The Prime Minister himself had given a written commitment to the Apex Court on 17th April, 2006 i.e. on the 21st day of fast in New Delhi, that all the families upto 122 mts were not rehabilitated while that height was sanctioned and that rehabilitation would be complete within 3 months i.e. by June, 2006.

The same has not yet happened and hence there could be no permission granted for further work at the dam.

Moreover, not one, but many committees of MoEF and the latest chaired by Shri Devendra Pandey have clearly concluded based on the documents and data that almost all the conditions in the environmental clearance are not fulfilled, but violated. Be it Gujarat on the non-compliance of CAD Plans, or Maharashtra and M.P. with targets and plans on protective / preventive measures, compensatory afforestation, health measures for all the three states.

It is, therefore, obvious that any clearance granted is only a result of political expediency. Mr. Narendra Modi since, last few months had been raising SSP issues publicly to blame or challenge the UPA Govt, which is succumbing to these pressures unnecessarily and unjustifiably. When Gujarat doesn't have its canal network ready and not built beyond 25-30% over the last 30 years, what is the need to raise the height and fill more water to drown the valley? Why can't the MoEF and the Narmada Control Authority under the Ministry of Water Resources compel Gujarat to complete execution of all environmental measures and building of canal network phase-wise and thereby utilize the already ponded waters?

The issue is politicized with nearing of 2014 elections, no doubt but people's lives and livelihoods being at stake, we can't allow such a heinous crime to be committed by flooding houses, communities, fields, and forests any more, not till all legal pre-conditions are fulfilled. We warn the NCA not to clear the raising of the dam height and also warn R&R Sub - Group to withdraw its decision. The people of the valley will compel these authorities to comply with law and are prepared to fight it tooth and nail.

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NAPM, 29th June, 2013

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