

Narmada Valley (India): Sardar Sarovar Dam Height Raised in Violation of Law - 250,000 People to Face Submergence

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2,50,000 People to Face Illegal Submergence in Narmada Valley

Sardar Sarovar Dam Height Raised in Violation of Law - Non-compliance of NWDT Award and SC 2000 Order

Supporters of Narmada Bachao Andolan Protest the Decision

New Delhi, June 13 : Yesterday was a black day for India, injustice was been done to people of Narmada Valley who have been fighting for their life and livelihood for three decades. In complete violation of the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award and the conditions imposed by Supreme Court 2000 judgement, Narmada Control Authority gave the permission to increase the height of the dam.

We protest this hurriedly taken decision which is completely unjustified, given that so many issues remain unaddressed till date and people are still living in their homes who are to be submerged. The lies being spread around about complete rehabilitation is not acceptable and the decision needs urgent review.

We had expected Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to behave like a statesman and before taking any decision consult all stakeholders, including Narmada Bachao Andolan representing lakhs of displaced persons. He however, acted only in the interest of Gujarat, behaving like Chief Minister of Gujarat. On one hand he talks about taking the country forward with his 'Vision of Inclusive Development', however, the decision is in complete contrast of that idea.

Sardar Sarovar Dam at its present height itself has 2 lakh people in its affected region while if the height is raised by erecting 17 meters high gates, the densely populated villages in Nimad Madhya Pradesh with houses, farms, shops, temples, mosques standing crop etc. will face a watery grave. Adivasi villages in the hills in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat habiting hundreds of families are also to be further submerged. Altogether not less than 2.5 lakh people, farmer, fishworkers, potters, shopkeepers will face a deluge and devastation, without rehabilitation, if the height is raised from 122 meters to 138 meters!

Thousands of families – mostly adivasis and small farmers are yet to be given land in M.P. and Maharashtra. While hundreds have not accepted cash compensation till date and are entitled to land, thousands who have been disbursed half or full installments of cash compensation have been duped by a nexus of agents and officials and the matter is sub judice (under judicial inquiry). Thousands of landless, fish workers, potters etc. are also awaiting alternative livelihood based R&R.

Expert Committees appointed by MoEF have concluded that numerous studies and safeguard measures on command area development, catchment area treatment, compensatory afforestation,

aquatic, health impacts seismic risks, downstream impacts is pending and gross violations have been pointed out, which are yet to be rectified.

Neither the R&R Sub Group nor the Environment Sub Group can grant clearance to raise the dam in the present situation, since the Supreme Court's Judgement of 2000 clearly mandates that permission shall be given *pari passu*, only after ensuing full and lawful compliance on all measures.

In M.P. and Maharashtra, 1000+ orders of the Grievance Redressal Authority are pending for compliance and 1500 of applications are also pending to be heard. Central Government is bound to comply with the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award, R&R Policies, Judgements of the Supreme Court, Action plans and GRA orders. The GRA's have not yet given their clearance and NCA's decision without the same is illegal.

A Judicial Commission under Justice S.S. Jha has been inquiring into a massive corruption scam of Rs. 1000 crores in M.P. and the inquiry as well as report on the fake registries, irregularities at 88 R&R sites, house plot allotments, livelihood to landless is due. Huge corruption implies huge rehabilitation work pending.

People of the Narmada valley are not at all opposed to the interests of the farmers, rural poor and real development of Gujarat and Rajasthan. We are not at all questioning or stalling the construction of canals in the command area. We appeal to you that the canal work needs to be undertaken on a priority basis and the water ponded at 121.92 mts needs to be fully utilized and all pending measures on R&R, environmental compliance should be ensured, before raising the dam height further.

Raise of dam height at this stage has only lead to additional submergence without any real increase in the benefits. Such a decision would be completely unlawful and does not behove good for the welfare of the citizens of India. The investment of 70,000 crores needs to be reviewed vis-à-vis the benefits and a comprehensive review needs to be undertaken, with all stake holders.

It is tragic the way decision has been taken, even before the decision was taken, Gujarat CM Anandiben Patel, had not only announced but was in Kevadia to perform puja. This shows lack of any attempt at looking at the facts by the concerned Ministers, Uma Bhartiji, Paraksh Javadekarji or Thavarchand Gehlot must have looked into all the reports, detailed data as well as the ground level situation, before deciding.

This hurried decision will cost the nation and Narmada Valley. More importantly, Gujarat & Rajasthan can get their share of water from Narmada river without this height increase and are not able to use even 20% of the water already available to them at the current height. This is clearly unnecessary, unjust and unwarranted decision that is not likely to have even legal sanction. Only additional benefit that increase in height can provide is about 10-20% additional power generation, in which Gujarat's share is only 16%: 57% share goes to MP and 27% share goes to Maharashtra.

This decision is a complete breach of every principle of democracy and justice. We stand in solidarity with people of Narmada Valley who have vowed to continue their struggle for justice.

Delhi Solidarity Group
