

Narmada Valley (India): Adivasis and Activists Warn the Maharashtra Government Against Permitting Completion of Sardar Sarovar Dam

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Press Note

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Narmada Dam Oustees Demand Legal, Just Rehabilitation First!

Adivasis and Activists Warn the Maharashtra Government Against Permitting Completion of Sardar Sarovar Dam

Today a large delegation of adivasis affected by Sardar Sarovar Dam (SSP) in the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra met the Collector, Pradip P. and CEO, Zila Parishad, Nandurbar and held four hour long dialogue on the issue of rehabilitation of thousands of adivasis in Maharashtra before raising dam height to 17 meters to completion.

As Anandi ben Mehta, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, has started a campaign expressing her confidence that Mr Modi, the Prime Minister of India, would soon permit the erection of 17meters high gates to finish off the dam. The people in the Narmada valley have shown the courage and commitment to question the same.

“We have been always presenting the data to establish the truth regarding displacement & environment but now we will be much more cautious about the politics behind the vested interest that is being pushed in violation of law and justice both” asserted Yogini Khanolkar. Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) has always declared that there are 2.5 lac. people residing in the submergence area of SSP (in 3 states) as on today in the communities with thousands of pakka houses, markets, shops with best of horticulture and agriculture, millions of trees, temples and mosques. All this just cannot be drowned by erection and closing of gates without rehabilitation since that will be in violation of Supreme Court’s judgments. The question is whether Mr. Modi would act like the CM of Gujarat or PM of whole of India? Will he take the steps to ensure that no condition is flouted and no family , that has not obtained all the rehab benefits would get affected?

If the Dam is pushed ahead letting waters in SSP reservoir rise by 17meters above ahead disastrous flood till last year, Who will take the responsibility for the contempt of court and the case of illegal submergence? And who would wipe the tears of adivasis, farmers, others and compensate the loses? Will there be a thorough enquiry into compliance on the environmental conditions of the MoEF, the Central Ministry ?

In today’s meeting in the Collector’s office the NBA team has categorically conveyed to the Government of Maharashtra that there are not less than one 1000 adivasi families who are yet to be

rehabilitated with land, houses, plots, irrigation and other amenities. They have also demanded full fledged health facilities and rationing with regularity and boat service in every village, since last year itself people had faced hell, death of destruction without all these services. While the situation is horrifying till date and the monsoon is at the door steps the senior officials have promised that they will take the challenge and ensure regular availability of doctors and medicines in the valley. Noorji Vasawe of Chimalkhedi narrated the story of snake bites and crocodile attacks without a doctor or the Barge with mobile dispensary anywhere in the site. A schoolgirl died, slipping into the river turned reservoir as there are no jettis nor lifting water scheme...

Where is agricultural land for rehabilitation? The collector is promising to show the land once again much of which is already shown and rejected. NBA proposal has been that of denuded forest land or private purchased at market rate. "We cannot tolerate nor accept any money package. Cash in lieu of land is neither legal nor beneficial to any adivasi. Only 51 adivasis who accepted cash, feel totally cheated as they could not purchase land within the amount and many of them are willing to return back the money package of 10 lakhs per hectare", said Manglya Pavara. In Madhya Pradesh the policy to pay cash for land led to fake registries scam! which is under enquiry as per the High Court order.

NBA appeals today to all the supporters to watch any move to raise the height and flood the valley where there are 2.5 lakh people with farms and houses, through a decision by Modi's government, it will be illegal and unjust .

NBA Demands:

- Immediate halt to any process to raise the dam height and expedite fair and just rehabilitation with land, livelihood and rehab sites, as per law.
- To initiate a review of costs and benefits of the project that is proving to be taking up a big toll of nature, life and livelihood.

Medha Patkar Vijay Valvi Yogini Khanolkar Noorji Valwe Chetan Salve

Mumbai / New Delhi, June 12 : Today seems to be critical day for Narmada. When Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has expressed his commitment to take the country forward with his 'Vision of Inclusive Development', it is an absolutely obnoxious contrast that the new government has not given us any hearing nor has it taken any time nor made any attempt to know the ground reality, before deciding to go forward with Sardar sarovar Dam construction to its final height.

Sardar Sarovar Dam at its present height itself has 2 lakh people in its affected region, so if the height is raised by installing 17 meters high gates, the densely populated villages in Nimad Madhya Pradesh with houses, farms, shops, temples, mosques, standing crops etc. will face a watery grave. Adivasi villages in the hills in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat habitating 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 139 meters!

Will NDA Government permit such an injustice to be caused in violation of Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award as well as Supreme Court judgements? Anandiben Patel, CM, Gujarat has

announced that today, in the NCA meeting, “verbal permission” will be granted and then the formalities will be completed within a week’s time. She has claimed that no party state has any objection to raising the height. This is obviously neither true nor transparent. None of the concerned new ministers, Uma Bhartiji, Paraksh Javadekarji or Thavarchand Gehlot have looked into all the reports, detailed data as well as the ground level situation. While two of them belong to Madhya Pradesh and one to Maharashtra. Will it be wrong to expect that they, give us a hearing and also assess the reality themselves. Their visit to the valley could go a long way.

How could the government deal with such a grave situation and go ahead just because Mr. Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister. May we remind all the Ministries that they have to first appraise the social and environmental impacts and judge serious non-compliance themselves. The latest news is that Mrs. Patel, CM has reached the dam site in Gujarat as if the decision is already taken....what a political expediency and breach of every principle of democracy and justice.

Medha Patkar, Meera, Nurji Padvi, Kailash Awasya, Bhagirath
