

Press Note no-180

Dated-29.11.2006



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
PERIYAR DAM ISSUE

Opening Remarks of
Dr.M.KARUNANIDHI
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

In the Meeting convened by
Prof. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ
Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources

New Delhi
29.11.2006

Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, Prof. SAIR-UD-DIN SOZ,
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Water Resources, Thiru.Jai Prakash
Narayan Yadav,
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala, Thiru.Achuthanandan,
Hon'ble Ministers from Kerala and Tamil Nadu,
Officers from
Central, State Governments and friends.

At the outset, I thank the Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, Prof. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ for having convened this meeting today.

I would like to thank the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala and the Hon'ble Minister of Irrigation of Kerala for participating in the meeting to enable us to find an acceptable solution on Mullai Periyar issue.

The relationship between Tamil Nadu and Kerala is historically firm, strong and true and is not a recent one.

Of the three Kings, Chera, Chola and Pandiya, the ancestors of Chera were in Kerala.

Even after the historic period, the Social thinkers who sowed the seeds of reform born in Kerala, were respected in Tamil Nadu and those born in Tamil Nadu, were respected by the people of Kerala.

Narayana Guru who struggled to see a Casteless Society and who believed in one Race, one God is being regarded by the Reformist Movement in Tamil Nadu even today.

It is a historic fact that a unique agitation was organized by Thanthai Periyar in Vaikom to abolish the Caste system in Kerala which earned him a title “Vaikom Hero”.

Thiru.T.M.Nayar whose mortal remains lying in the cemetery at London was one of the senior most Dravidian Leaders and a fore-runner in sowing the seed for Caste-based reservation. The image of this great leader still remains deeply in the hearts of the people of Tamil Nadu.

It may be seen from Tamil literature also that Kannagi, born in Thanjavur District in Chola Kingdom, traveled to Madurai and demanded justice from the Pandiya King to prove the innocence of her husband Kovalan who was charged with theft. Cheran-Senguttuvan who brought stone from Himalayas to erect a statute for Kannagi belongs to the people of both the States.

We are all excited to know that Kannagai temple is located in Mangaladevi Koil in Kerala.

Thus our two States Kerala and Tamil Nadu have had close historical cultural and spiritual links for several centuries continued and fostered by Rationalist and Political leaders. When we think about it, instead of close relationship blossoming among us, a question arises in

my mind whether the feeling of bitterness and ill-feeling leading to differences could be allowed to grow. Keeping in view the above feelings, with good intention, not to cause even an iota of damage to our friendship and National integrity, I would like to place before you certain factual information about Mullai Periyar.

Pursuant to the suggestion of the Supreme Court, we have come here with an open mind, to find a solution to the Periyar Dam issue which was adjudicated by the Supreme Court in its Order dated 27.2.2006.

Subsequent to the Supreme Court Order, which permitted the Government of Tamil Nadu to raise the water level to 142 ft. initially and then to raise it to the designed Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of 152 ft. after the remaining strengthening works are completed, the Kerala Government has amended the act in March 2006.

Tamil Nadu had completed all the major strengthening works with the concurrence of the Government of Kerala. According to the Experts, the Dam is safe and there is no need for any doubt about safety aspects. The remaining strengthening works like strengthening the Baby Dam, etc., could not be taken up due to certain un-expected development.

Raising the water level in the Dam to 142 ft. initially is absolutely necessary to irrigate the lands in about two lakh acres in the drought

prone Districts of Theni, Dindigul, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram.

Thousands of families in these Districts, who were hitherto served by the Periyar Project, are suffering for the past 27 years with inadequate water for irrigation, and drinking purposes and consequent loss of agricultural income. It is only to avert the frequent famines that were prevalent in these district, the Periyar Project itself was conceived and executed. The benefits of the project, which were reaching the farmers for decades, should not be denied on considerations not supported by any scientific and technical data.

Though the Supreme Court has given a clear verdict, the subsequent stand of Kerala Government has made the farmers of Tamil Nadu despondent. I would, therefore, like to bring to the notice of this Forum that the Government of Tamil Nadu is looking at this issue on wider humanitarian consideration of protecting the rights of our farmers dependant on Periyar water for their livelihood. Kerala State is endowed with abundant availability of water. On the contrary, Tamil Nadu is a chronically water deficit State. In an egalitarian Society and Socialistic Democracy like India sharing of surplus with the needy is the basic tenet, dictated by Nature itself. Based on this concept dams have been built decades back, for the well being of the needy people at large. If the dictate of the nature is not fulfilled nature is not going to forgive us.

Let me bring to your kind notice that all the studies and field experiments conducted by the Central Water Commission and the Expert Committee, have confirmed that the dam is quite safe for raising the water level to 142 ft. initially. It has also been observed that the earthquakes reported, have had no effect on the structure of the dam. The dam has been designed to withstand the effect of the earthquakes anticipated. When such is the position, I think we are not doing any justice by thrusting an opinion in the minds of the public, that the dam may burst if the water level is raised to 142 ft. No gravity dam has ever burst and this contingency does not arise in the case of the Periyar dam which has been strengthened to the status of a new dam. Now the Dam, according to neutral and objective Experts, is as good as a new Dam.

Keeping all the facts in view, there is no cause for any panic or confusion with regard to the safety of the Dam. I would like to convey that the safety of the people living downstream of the Periyar Dam will not be compromised under any circumstances by the Government of Tamil Nadu. we are equally conscious of our responsibility to the people living downstream.

Based on the Experts Committee report already submitted to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court order, it is hoped that Kerala

would review its stand and arrange to repeal the amendments made on 18.3.2006 in the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation Act, 2003.

We are inter-dependent on each other for social and economic well being of both the States. In view of our close links and inter-dependency such issues can be amicably settled if we look at the issues in terms of our mutual interest and with a view to share the benefits in the interest of both the States and the People.

I hope that the Government of Kerala will approach the whole issue in a spirit of friendly neighbourliness and cooperate with the Government of Tamil Nadu in implementing the Orders of Supreme Court in letter and spirit.

Thanking you,

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