

Adverse Impact of Violation of the Bansagar Agreement

The consumptive use of some water by NTPC and UPSEB in their thermal power plants is going to play havoc with the century old some canal system in central Bihar plains which is known as 'rice bowl' of Bihar. Already above one million acre feet some water is being used in violation of bansagar and rihand agreement between the co-basin state of Bihar, U.P. and M.P. the 510 Miles long some river originates from amarkantak in M.P. and flowing through sonebhadra district of U.P. joins the Ganga near Patna in Bihar.

It seems, ignoring the claims of Bihar farmers, the present chief minister is also accepting the terms of U.P. and N.T.P.C. that it needs power instead of some waters. True Bihar starved of electrical energy needs it but definitely not at the cost of some water leading to dying of the century old canal system.

Bihar has been using some river water since 1874. Based on uninterrupted supply of water from some and its tributaries a well knit system of irrigation and navigation canal, were developed during the british raj. The century old canal system provides ample water to about 22 lakh acres of fertile plain land in six problematic districts of the central Bihar. Importance of this well established irrigation system in the state can be well understood from the fact that it contributes nearly half of the total irrigation potential of all the existing major and medium irrigation project of Bihar taken together.

The perennial and customary rights of Bihar over some water were duly acknowledged and fully protected at the time of rihand reservoir construction in 1960 and also when tripartite agreement on Bansagar project was signed among the co-basin states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It was mentioned in no uncertain words in the rihand project that U.P. would make no consumptive use of rihand water except generating hydel power and a minimum flow of 5000 cusecs would be maintained regularly for use in the downstream some irrigation system in Bihar. Based on regulated release from rihand reservoir Bihar replaced the old anicut at Dehri on-some with a Barrage at indrapuri over mainstream some and increased the irrigation potential in the command area by constructing two additional high level canals, besides remodeling the century old canal system for improved irrigation and navigation.

In the tripartite bansagar agreement too, the entire water of the rihand reservoir was allotted to Bihar. The customary right of Bihar over some water was accepted in the agreement and 5 M.A.F. water at indrapuri Barrage was allotted for old canal system-on priority besides. There was to be no reduction in this water even if the annual availability of water in river some becomes less than the estimated 14.25 M.A.F. also U.P. was not given any consumptive right over rihand water except for generating hydel power according to 1960 rihand reservoir project provisions. According to a separate agreement on rihand signed between U.P. & Bihar in 1973 alongwith the Bansagar AGREEMENT, Bihar was to draw additional 0.3 M.A.F. water from Rihand reservoir during lean kharief period in October.

However, in violation to the Bansagar and Rihand agreement the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh has set up thermal power plants in state sector and also authorized the N.T.P.C. to set its own super thermal power plants which will use water from rihand reservoir. This violation of agreement first came to light in 1981 when the central power department approached the union irrigation ministry for clearance of the feasibility report of 3000 MW WAIDHAN super thermal power station. At that time the ministry of irrigation in the some command area in Bihar. It had opined that concurrence of the Govt. of Bihar must be obtained before clearance of the project. Yet project was cleared without even informing Bihar.

The N.T.P.C. is now working on a invidious plan of setting up a chain of super thermal power stations in the vicinity of singrauli coalfield in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh based on the water of the Rihand sub-basin of River some. The NCPTC report entitled "Integrate thermal power development at singrauli coalfield region in U.P. & M.P. offers attractive opportunity for locating a thermal power

complex for bulk generation of power and that sufficient resource is available in the region to justify installation of total generation capacity of order of 20,000 MW.”

The NTPC has also and calculated the committed as well as projected utilization of the water in the thermal power plants. According to NTPC assessment based on the 1967 the annual average availability of water in the Rihand is 3.5 MAF. After deducting 0.91 M.A.F. share of M.P. in the upper reach of Rihand reservoir the remaining quantity left in the reservoir which could be used in the thermal power stations, would be of the order of 2.59 M.A.F. according to its calculation 20,000 MW power plant complex would alone need about 2.15 M.A.F. water annually. This is inclusive of evaporation losses at Rihand and Obra reservoirs on river Rihand as well as the demand for drinking and other requirement of the extra population growth for thermal power station, coal mines and auxiliary industries.

Apart from this, there is also a proposal for installation of two super thermal power stations in the vicinity of Obra dam, the water for which would be drawn from Bijul river, a tributary of Rihand. The requirement of cooling and consumptive water for this would be of the order of 0.22 M.A.F. in proposed at Bishrampur in Surguja distt. Of M.P the 0.091 M.A.F. water requirement for which is to be met from Rihand river. Thus the total withdrawal from Rihand catchment can be calculated be around 2.4584 M.A.F.

The NTPC in the same report has also calculated the annual water availability at Rihand Lake on the basis of river discharge observed between 1945 and 1967. It comes to 3.35 M.A.F. at 90 percent dependability. But this calculation seems to be on higher side when compared with the water yield assessment based on the release data, supply by the U.P. state electricity board from the reservoir between 1961 and 1980. On UP SEB rating at 90% dependability the annual yield in Rihand comes to be 2.25 M.A.F. which is 31.7% less than that assessed by NTPC. The 90% dependable yield at Rihand reservoir calculated on the basis the annual water yield at Japla on some mainstream as per records of the then Ganga Basin water resource organization (GBWRO) also comes around 2.41 M.A.F. it is intriguing by the NTPC for such hydrological analysis when more reliable data, since operation of the Rihand reservoir are available.

The picture that emerges out of the analysis of the present and future used in Rihand reservoir is rather distributing and hence needs careful consideration. In 1983 the NTPC has stated in its report that the committed use from Rihand reservoir was 0.9914 M.A.F. and overall use will increase to 2.2458 MAF which is more or less equal to the annual release from the Rihand reservoir. Then what will happen to the century old sone irrigation system in Bihar ?

It may be mentioned that in the Bansagar agreement there is no specific mention about the use of sone waters for purposes other other irrigation and hydel power generation. The entire water resource of 14.25 MAF, U.P. – 1.25 and M.P. 2.25 MAF). The sone river commission and the Bansagar control board in their respective reports have already termed the consumptive use of Rihand waters already unauthorized and illegal. On June 4, 1983 in a meeting of the officials of the Co-basin states chaired by the union irrigation secretary, the N.T.P.C. representative confirmed that Govt. of U.P. authorized N.T.P.C. to utilize the Rihand water and in turn fifty percent of the energy generated at power plants is being utilized by U.P. for providing infrastructural facilities. It was decided that water utilities for any purpose other than irrigation or hydel power generation would be met by the concerned state by when use is being made.

Since U.P. does not have share in Rihand water the committed use made by it or by the N.T.P.C. on its authorization be compensated from its share in the Bansagar reservoir or in any sub-basin of river sone. But this decision is yet unimplemented and violation of the Bansagar agreement is taking place as usual even today. The consumptive use of Rihand water by the thermal power stations would adversely affect the sone irrigation system in Bihar damaging about on third of crops in tail end areas of of the canal command every year.