

KANHAR DAM (Anwar, Dudhi, U.P.) PROJECT: Present Status, Prospects and Apprehensions

(Based on a study visit to the Dam site on August 19, 2015): Swami Gyan Swarup Sanand (Formerly Dr. G.D. Agrawal, Professor & Head of Civil Engineering, IIT Kanpur and Member-Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board, New Delhi)

- 1- The present field-visit was essentially triggered by the information that NGT, in a recent order on a PIL against the Dam, had noted several irregularities and flaws in the planning, processing and implementation from the view of environmental safeguards (the most critical being total lack of any EIA and public hearing, and the environmental and forest clearances presented by project authorities being totally meaningless as they were as much as 30 and 10 years old respectively). And yet NGT declined to issue directions to "STOP ALL WORK ON THE PROJECT TILL ALL SUCH LACUNAE ARE FULLY REMOVED AND ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLINESS OF THE PROJECT ESTABLISHED" in view of considerable amount of work has already been completed and significant expenditure already incurred. This visit was to see first hand the progress of the construction work and get an idea of expenditure already incurred.
- 2- Current Status of construction and expenditure: The Dam involves a central concrete spillway section, rock-fill sections on both sides (some 1000 m long on right side and 700 m on left side) and earthen dam sections on both sides totaling some 2.5 kms, along with various appurtenances, protective aprons and other devices, canal headworks as also two canal networks one on left and the other on right. Obviously the most important, critical and costly components of the project are the central concrete section and the rock-filled sections on the two sides of the central section as these are the sections that really "dam" the river and face its fury. So far as these critical and costly sections are concerned, very little (not even 2-3 %) of the work has been done so far. Only foundation excavation and laying of 1'm thick base-concrete have been done which have got covered by flood debris and shall need to be cleaned before further work. My rough estimate of total expenditure so far incurred on these critical sections shall be not more than (Rs. 100 Crore) one hundred crores of rupees which I shall consider not significant on a project of this magnitude.
- 3- In addition to the above work, the project authorities have almost completed the earth-dam sections on both sides and significant parts of the canal network and spent money on land acquisition, rehabilitation, and site facilities. Recently, in the past few months work was done on river-diversion spurs and channel but much of it has been totally washed away by the recent flood flows. Most of these other expenses incurred so-far, I consider results of poor planning and at best only auxiliary and preparatory. In proper planning the construction of earthen sections of Dam and work on canal networks should have been synchronised with and started only after work started on the central section. Thus though the total expenditure on the project might have even exceeded my estimate of Rs. 300-400 crores, I shall not consider it so significant as to push the work ahead irrespective of ensuring environment friendly nature of the project. NTPC claims to have spent over Rs. 1000 crores on the power-tunnel and other parts of Loharinag-Pala Hydel Project on Bhagirathi in Uttarakhand till August 2010 when Govt. of India and NGRBA decided to dump the project to conserve Ganga ji and environment. Dr. Man Mohan Singh,

the Prime Minister, clearly and firmly stated "money already spent can be absolutely no reason to give a go-ahead to projects likely to cause adverse environmental impacts". NGT should realise that it shall set a very very bad example to allow work to go on on a project without fully ensuring it's environment friendly nature, merely on basis of large expenditure having been already incurred.

- 4- My most severe apprehensions are that creation of a large reliable water-body by the proposed Kanhar Dam shall prove a big attraction to the Thermal Power Mafia just as Rihand Dam has done, and destroy the air, water and ecology of the benign valley.