Interlinking of Rivers



The Supreme Court of India has urged that the project for the linking of the rivers of India be accelerated and implemented by 2016. The Prime Minister subsequently set up of a Task Force to consider the modalities of implementing the project. The interlinking of rivers has been presented by the Government as a major initiative towards meeting the future water problems. Estimated to cost Rs. 5,60,00,00 million, the project envisages 30 links across Himalayan and peninsular rivers. The idea behind this is based on the fact that an enormous amount of water from rivers flows into the sea. It is envisaged that if this is prevented, and water transferred from water-abundant rivers to water-deficit areas, there will be adequate supply for everyone in every part of the country. At another level, the project is seen as promoting national integration and a fair sharing of natural water.

The estimated cost is about 50 times the total allocation for the ongoing water resource development projects in the Tenth Plan. There are talks of opening doors to private investors; in that case traditional rights of people over water resources will be affected. The environmental and human costs of the project are going to be colossal. These will include, disturbance to pristine biodiversity rich areas, disruption of tribal lives, changes in river morphology and water quality, submergence of forests and agricultural lands etc. Connecting the Himalayan Rivers with the peninsular rivers through some 40,000 km long inland waterways will cause massive human displacement. The large network of dams and canals will also alter the natural drainage such that occasional flooding and water logging will inundate millions of

hectares of agricultural land. The project may alter the geography of the country significantly. Inter linking of rivers may disrupt the entire hydrological cycle by stopping the rivers from performing their ecological function before reaching the oceans.

Also, given changing global climate, what seems like surplus water today, may not even be available a few years down the line. There is no provision for any mechanism to deal with matters concerning inter-basin transfers. The Centre has no legal authority to decide on this and no State will agree.

Proposed Inter Basin Water Transfer Links

ARABIAN SEA LAKSHADWEEP BENGAL

INDIAN OCEAN

Map: http://nwda.gov.in/writereaddata/sublinkimages/12.jpg, http://nwda.gov.in/writereaddata/sublinkimages/13.jpg

Source: www.envirodebate.net