

Maharashtra's desperate drought needs some desperate measures**Stop westward diversion of water by Tata and Koyna dams immediately**

Maharashtra is facing the worst drought of possibly over 4 decades¹. Thousands villages are already being fed by water from tankers and now there is already move to transport water by trains. Ujani dam has zero live storage as per the latest update. At the same time, Maharashtra is diverting water *from* the drought prone Krishna basin AWAY to west flowing rivers of Konkan, ultimately flowing into the Arabian Sea. This should indeed be stopped in this drought year, when Krishna basin is facing one of the worst droughts. The diversions are happening from Koyna dam and also from six Tata dams. Six Tata dams are all in Bhima basin and if these diversions by Tata dams are stopped, the water being diverted will flow into Bhima basin rather than going out of Krishna basin as it is happening now.

Diversions from Tata dams: Tatas own three hydropower projects in Maharashtra, all in Bhima sub basin of Krishna river basin in Maharashtra. They include 72 MW Khopoli project (involving four dams: Shirawatha, Walwhan, Lonavala and Kundli), 75 MW Bhivpuri project involving Thokewadi dam on Andra river, a tributary of Indrayani and 150 MW Bhira project involving the famous Mulshi Dam. These three projects collectively divert about 1413 Million Cubic Meters of water annually as per the Award of Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal in 2010. What this means is that if these projects were not there or if they stop operating, Krishna basin in Maharashtra can get 1413 MCM of additional water. Today that water is being diverted to west flowing rivers in Konkan that is a water surplus area with over 3000 mm rainfall. (For location of some of these dams, see: [http://www.sandrp.in/basin_maps/Hydropower Projects%20 in Krishna Basin.pdf](http://www.sandrp.in/basin_maps/Hydropower%20Projects%20in%20Krishna%20Basin.pdf), project no 4 and 13 are Tata projects, the third Bhira Power project of Tata too is in Bhima sub-basin of Krishna basin, basically on the Mula tributary, just south of Khopoli and Bhivpuri projects. Koyna project is at no 15, also in Krishna basin.)

Diversion from Koyna dam: Indeed, Koyna dam is situated in Krishna basin, it has the highest live storage capacity among all of Maharashtra dams, at 2836 MCM, and it has five power houses with total capacity of 1956 MW. Out of this 1920 MW installed capacity comprising stage I to IV would take the water *out* of the Krishna basin, into the west flowing water surplus basins, and only the smallest of them all, 36 MW dam toe power house would allow water to flow into Krishna basin in Maharashtra. As per KWDT award of 2010, the Koyna dam annually diverts 1911.4 MCM of water AWAY from Krishna basin.

As per the latest available storage position of Maharashtra Reservoirs, as on January 14, 2013 (see: <http://www.mahawrd.org/> and go to Dam storage from the left hand side menu), these Tata and Koyna dams had 2835 MCM of water in live storage. Potentially, all this water and whatever additionally flow into these dams in rest of the year, can be useful for the drought prone areas of Maharashtra, if it is decided NOW that no more water from any of the dams would be allowed to flow *this year* into westward Konkan rivers till monsoon arrives. THAT DECISION SHOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN AS SOON AS IT WAS KNOWN THAT MONSOON IS A FAILURE AND MAHARASHTRA IS IN DIRE NEED OF ALL AVAILABLE WATER. WE are already at least five months late in this decision, but now this decision needs to be taken URGENTLY.

Just the water available in live storage capacity of these dams today is sufficient to provide 100 litres per capita per day for about 7 crore people for a whole year. When people are facing severe water scarcity, it is high time this decision is taken.

One adverse fall out of this decision would be reduction in generation of hydropower from these projects that would have otherwise happened if the water was allowed to flow away westward to Konkan rivers.

¹ Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has said this is the worst drought than even the 1972 drought, which is considered the worst in recent decades, see: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/This-years-drought-worse-than-1972-famine-says-Sharad-Pawar/articleshow/18126760.cms>

But in times of such crisis such decisions needs to be considered. Maharashtra is already facing the possibilities of conflicts and clashes, people and cattle in Krishna basin are already facing dire water scarcity. Care may have to be taken to see what use the water now flowing westward is put to in the Konkan river basins and this may need to be taken care off where necessary.

The decision to use all available water in the Tata and Koyna dams listed above, only for Krishna basin, by not allowing westward diversion would be a great boon for the people. Sangli and Satara district, immediate downstream of Koyna dam and also vast areas in Bhima basin could benefit from such a decision. This would also be right decision considering that drinking water and basic livelihood water for farmers is supposed to get top priority among all water users. We hope Maharashtra government takes this decision urgently.

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