

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we will take up the Nationalisation of Inter-State Rivers Bill, 1999. Shri Vaiko.

SHRI VAIKO (SIVAKASI): I beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for nationalisation of inter-State rivers for the purpose of equitable distribution of river waters among the States and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am so grateful to you for giving me this opportunity for which I have been longing for months. In the Twelfth Lok Sabha, the same Bill was introduced but I did not get the opportunity because the Bill was not taken for consideration.

The hon. Member, Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh has introduced a Bill on Electoral Reforms. It is a very significant and interesting Bill. I am also thankful to him for cutting short his speech so that I could see that my Bill is taken for consideration.

Sir, our country is a beautiful country having abundant resources, incomparable in the globe. The snow-covered peaks, beautiful perennial rivers, the peninsula surrounded by three seas, particularly in the Southern tip, a vast landscape and a large population. According to the recent statistics, within a span of five years, we would be marching ahead of China in the strength of population. But Mr. Chairman, Sir, when I narrated the beautiful landscape with snow-covered peaks and perennial rivers and the abundant wealth of sea, at the same time, lakhs of people are subjected to drought, unbearable drought. Particularly, in the recent days, we have been shocked to see in Doordarshan and other Television Channels as to what is happening in the States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and some parts of Karnataka. The cattle are dying before the eyes of the farmers. I could understand as to how the household farmers nurture these cattles as the members of their family.

But we see a number of carcasses of cattle lying at many places in these drought-affected States. They have died for want of water and people also suffer very much particularly due to shortage of drinking water.

Long years back, we were expecting the arrival of big ships from abroad with foodgrains under PL-480. Today, we have become not only self-sufficient, but we are also able to export foodgrains sometimes. The credit for this should to the farmers of our country. Now, in this new millennium, we are competing with other countries so that we can become a super economic power in the world. We have enormous potential in our country. There are lakhs and lakhs of barren lands, but we need water for irrigation.

Sir, in our country, a lot of rivers run through many States and then submerge into the seas. Most of the abundant water go, unutilised, into the seas. If we make a perspective plan to harness this wealth of our rivers, then we could become the number one economic power in the world, particularly due to the rich agricultural wealth of our country.

Sir, we respect the rivers with great religious attachment and the rivers are called in the name of women in our country. They are described as Goddesses. Even in the epic *Ramayana*, it is described that Rama had passed through the Gangetic plains, passed through the river Godavari etc. But, enormous amount of water is going as waste. We also have some river water disputes arising out of some inter-State rivers.

Sir, there are rivers running through countries also. We have some rivers running through countries like Mexico and United States of America, France and Germany, Sudan and Egypt, Pakistan and India etc. There was a river water pact for sharing the waters of Ravi and Beas, which was signed by late lamented Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and General Ayub Khan. Due to inter-State river waters disputes, in our Election Manifesto, we have mentioned that all the inter-State rivers in our country should be nationalised.

Sir, India is a federal country; it should be a federal country and I would be delighted if this country is called the United States of India, instead of India, a Union of States. I wish that that day came soon. Therefore, I propose that only the Central Government should have exclusive right and control over all inter-State rivers and should distribute river waters according to a pre-determined formula for allocation of waters.

This will not only enable distribution of river water among the different States without affecting the interests of the concerned States but will also enable proper utilisation of available resources.

Our economy is subjected to financial loss of the order of Rs. 12,000 crore to Rs. 14,000 crore every year on account of loss of generation of 8,000 MW hydel power and creation of very large irrigation potential due to non-settlement of inter-State river water-sharing among the basin States. There are disputes in this country over and above the prominent disputes like the Cauvery River Water dispute, the Krishna River Water dispute and the Sardar Sarovar Dam dispute. There are six more inter-State River water disputes involving the States like Punjab,

Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar which are currently at various stages of the settlement process. Each of them possesses the potential of turning into a hyper-sensitive issue if they are not properly and timely responded to.

During the last 18 years, the inter-State river water disputes have been on the increase both numberwise and sensitivitywise. By the year 2025, the *per capita* water availability in our country according to the assessment of experts would be as low as 1,500 cubic metres per year. As such, there is a high probability that we may have to confront a large number of inter-State river disputes in the coming years.

I am speaking about this subject above partisan considerations and above political party considerations. I do not want to avail of this opportunity to criticise any Government or any political party or any State because I am also an aggrieved party in the Godavri River water dispute. My State is also involved in it but I will not utilise this opportunity to criticise any other State.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (SILCHAR): Your mind is in Sri Lanka.

SHRI VAIKO : All right. Let us discuss it as a separate issue.

From the current inter-State river disputes, it is now evident that the existing water dispute settlement mechanism and the Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956 are not at all adequate, are not at all effective and are not at all efficient. So is the case of the National Water Policy of 1987. Therefore, it is imperative that the Inter-State Water Disputes Act is urgently amended so that it is truly an effective legal instrument for timely settlement of the inter-State river disputes. Similarly, the National Water Policy should also be improved upon for inclusion of criteria for sharing of inter-State river water among the basin States and there should be a policy framework achieving optimum utilisation of the scarce water resources of the country.

Our hon. Members, particularly senior Members like Shri Shivraj V. Patil, in this House might remember that the Ganga-Cauvery Link was very much in the Press. There were deliberations in the Parliament and speeches were made by the political leaders.

I do remember that the Ganga-Cauvery Link would bring emotional integration. Dr. K.L. Rao, an eminent engineer, was a Minister of the Union Government for nearly a decade in 1960s. He was the author of this Ganga-Cauvery Canal Integration. He made a thorough study. He submitted his proposal and in that proposal he said that Ganga water could be taken up to the tip of this Peninsula and all the rivers could be linked. But what happened? That proposal was taken into consideration by experts and they came to a conclusion that it was not practically possible. Enormous amount of money would have to be spent because the water has to be taken beyond Vindhyas and electricity would be needed. Crores and crores of rupees were unbearable. That was the final conclusion of the Government. So, that idea was dropped.

But however, the Ministry of Irrigation, now the Ministry of Water Resources, and Central Water Commission, on the basis of the report which was formulated by Dr. K.L. Rao, have formulated a national perspective plan for water resources development which envisages inter-linkages between the various Peninsular and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficient basins for optimum utilisation of water resources. The Government of India has established National Water Development Agency as an autonomous society in July 1982 to carry out the water balance and other studies of national perspective plan.

Sir, when the erstwhile Ministry of Irrigation, now the Ministry of Water Resources, and the Central Water Commission formulated the national perspective plan for water resources development, that plan comprised two main components. That has already been stated that the first was the Himalayan rivers development and the second was Peninsular rivers development. That was divided into two. For framing up the proposal of inter-linking, Peninsular as well as the Himalayan rivers, the Government of India set up a National Water Development Agency and Peninsular Development Agency.

It is very important. First of all, there will be Himalayan rivers development and secondly, there will be Peninsular rivers development and inter-linking these Himalayan as well as Peninsular rivers, the Government of India set up a National Water Development Agency in 1982.

Sir, the present mandate is to prepare feasibility report of the links. Suitable provision for this purpose has been made in the Ninth Five Year Plan. I will come to both the plans, that is, the Peninsular Rivers Plan and the Himalayan Rivers Plan and I am very much interested in this Peninsular Rivers because that is the linking of Mahanadi, Godavari and all the rivers up to Cauvery.

The inter-State Water Disputes, namely, Ravi-Beas Water Dispute between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan and the Cauvery Water Dispute between Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the Union Territory of Pondicherry, was

referred to the Tribunal under the provisions of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956 for adjudication.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now we have to take up Half-an-hour Discussion. Shri Vaiko, you can continue your speech next time.

SHRI VAIKO : Okay, Sir.

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1730 hours