

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

State of Karnataka

Vs.

State of T.Nadu & Ors.

C.A.No.2453/2007

(Dipak Misra,J., Amitava Roy and A.M.Khanwilkar,JJ.,)

18.10.2016

ORDER

1. Mr. Mukul Rohatgi, learned Attorney General for India being assisted by Ms. Pinky Anand, learned Additional Solicitor General has filed the Report of the Committee. The conclusion of the Report reads as under:-

"Social Aspects

1. The plights of farmers in both the states have been witnessed. In the absence of required water the labour employment for farming and fishing is also limited creating a scenario of unemployment and financial hardship to them.
2. There has been large number of suicides reported in Mandya district of Karnataka.
3. The Government of Karnataka has declared 42 out of 48 Talukas under Cauvery basin as drought affected Talukas based on Central Government guidelines.
4. Both the States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu need to appreciate interest of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in protection of their established irrigation and Karnataka's aspirations for development respectively and should educate their people accordingly.

Technical Aspects

1. The deficit impact on account of water allocation at 50% dependability can be neutralized to some extent by optimal, dynamic and resilient planning of the cropped area considering the flow pattern and forecast. This can address the issue of unemployment and financial hardship in the basin States.
2. The water application techniques are outdated and unscientific and the value of water is not realised. The water applied to the field is on the concept of flooding from one field to another adjacent field and as such the water consumption is on the higher

side and during period of distress this becomes very significant depending upon the soil condition. The infrastructure to deliver water to the farmers is century old and has very low conveyance efficiency. This needs to be modernized for optimal use of scarce water. The conveyance efficiency can be further improved by piped distribution network and application efficiency by micro irrigation (sprinkler and drip) and precision irrigation. In addition, on-farm development (OFD) works may be provided to ensure equitable distribution of water to individual farmer's field.

3. At places near the coast the ground water cannot be utilised for the reason that water is saline due to ingress from sea water. The only source of irrigation in such areas is surface water from Mettur reservoir.

4. The efforts made by Government of Tamil Nadu by way of providing subsidised agricultural inputs can bear fruits only when sufficient water is made available for the full crop period.

5. The drinking water demands needs to be optimised and efficient delivery mechanism needs to be put in place.

6. Automated water measuring instrumentation needs to be provided for transparent recording of flows and water diversion along with system for online transmission and retrieval of data through dashboard.

7. Crop alignment and crop diversification need to be practiced.

8. Participatory Irrigation Management is to Be encouraged for optimal, efficient and equitable distribution of water amongst the farmers."

2. As we find from the Report, the Committee has not suggested with regard to any quantity of water. Mr. Rohatgi, learned Attorney General has, when the matter was taken up at forenoon session, submitted that the appeals by special leave filed by all the States, namely, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are not maintainable. Mr. A.S. Nambiar, learned senior counsel appearing for the Union Territory of Puducherry echoed the same argument.

3. Mr. Rohatgi addressed at length with regard to the maintainability of the appeals and after he has finished, Mr. Fali S. Nariman, learned senior counsel appearing for the State of Karnataka commenced his submission. The stand of Mr. Nariman is that the appeal by special leave is maintainable. We intend to adjudicate the maintainability of the appeals which have been preferred by special leave under Article 136 of the Constitution first. At this juncture, the issue that arises for consideration is what should be the nature of interim order. On 4th October, 2016, we had directed the State of Karnataka to release 2000 cusecs of water from 7th October till 18th October, 2016. It is submitted by Mr. M.R. Naik, learned Advocate General appearing for the State of Karnataka that the order has been complied with. Mr. Shekhar Naphade, learned senior counsel appearing for the State of Tamil Nadu submits that the State is in dire need of water. We take note of it. Mr. Nariman, learned

senior counsel appearing for the State of Karnataka submitted with quite promptitude that the Karnataka is also not in a better stage. Mr. Rohatgi, learned Attorney General referred to the Report to highlight the issue that both the States are in the state of dire need of water. We have been apprised that north-east monsoon has not yet set in and the prediction is that it is likely to set in from 25th October, 2016. We have so recorded as the learned counsel at the Bar have apprised us so.

4. Let the matter be listed on 19th October, 2016 for further hearing. The interim order passed on the earlier occasion shall continue until further orders.

5. At this stage, we are compelled to reiterate our earlier order in which we had expressed with certitude that the Executive of both the States shall see to it that the peace and harmony be maintained in both the States and citizens do not become law unto themselves. It will be the obligation of the Executive to see that when the matter is heard and the interim order has been passed and the State of Karnataka is complying with the order and is bound to comply, mutuality of respect between both the States and the citizens should be maintained. Maintenance of law and order and care for public property is a sign of elevated democracy.