

OFFICE OF THE FORMER LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Gandhinagar.

Press Note

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- In the past all governments took all political parties in confidence on the Narmada issue.
- BJP Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh harmed interest of Gujarat by objecting to permission to Gujarat for use of surplus water of Narmada in the 84th meeting of NCA.
- At a lavish function at Siddhpur on September 8,2005 Chief Minister had claimed that Sarasvati river near Siddhpur will have Narmada water round the year. The river had Narmada water on that day only.
- To cover up his criminal negligence in the case of Narmada project, he is keeping other parties away from the project and resorting to lies.
- Gujarat is not pursuing work of rehabilitation of Narmada Project Affected Persons while Madhya Pradesh is not taking up other works of the project. As a result, a committee of the tribunal is not giving permission to close doors of the project.
- This permission is not to be given by the centre, but Chief Minister is dragging centre for petty political gains.
- Instead of giving benefits of farmer centric Narmada project to most needy people, Chief Minister has started giving its advantage to his industrialist friends.
- The command area of Narmada has been decided by the Tribunal. Any kind of arbitrary indulgence in it can cause a heavy damage to the project.
- Why leaders of other political parties were not invited to speak a programme organized by NGOs on Narmada. Chief Minister should discuss salient feature of Narmada project on public platform.

Senior Congress leader and former Leader of Opposition Shaktisinh Gohil today charged Gujarat Chief Minister with using Narmada project for a canard campaign against the centre. This is just to conceal his own failures in implementing state's most ambitious multipurpose project which is life line of Gujarat, he said.

In media interaction, Gohil said that Chief Minister who was feeling the heat of agitational mood of scarcity affected people of Gujarat was resorting to blame game rather addressing the issue with people sensitive mindset. But that is not on the

agenda of the Chief Minister who is always busy promoting his image at the cost of people and resources of Gujarat.

In the past, he said, all political parties had a joint front on the issue of Narmada project. But now the Chief Minister is not taking anyone in confidence. This is just because this would expose him and his failures.

Gujarat gets more than 9MAF of Narmada which is its share. This can help provide water to people of parched Gujarat. Narmada Tribunal has made it clear that Gujarat can use the surplus water, but BJP ruled Madhya Pradesh has objected to it on flimsy grounds. Gohil circulated copy of minutes of the 84th meeting of NCA where these objections have been recorded. Chief Minister should persuade his counterpart not to throw spanners in the implementation of Narmada project if he is genuinely interested in the welfare of Gujarat and its people.

At a levish function at Siddhpur on September 8, 2005 Chief Minister had claimed that Sarasvati river near Siddhpur will have Narmada water round the year. He had said that the check dams in the bed of Saraswati River will be filled by Narmada water through canal and pipelines. And thus the river will have water round the year. Chief Minister had gathered more than 150 religious leaders and others to make the function a great publicity show. No water has been brought into the river after that day. If saints present at 2005 meeting go to Siddhpur today, they will find people playing cricket in the river bed, Gohil said.

They would realize how great “Feku” is Gujarat Chief Minister. It is precisely for his lies that people call Gujarat Chief Minister “Feku” in the cyber world, matter of shame for six crore Gujaratis.

Gohil said that Gujarat government was not taking steps for the rehabilitation of project affected persons despite the fact that it was decided in the meeting of the task force of held on January 8 last year. On the other hand Madhya Pradesh is also not doing anything. As a result, the committee appointed by the Tribunal is not giving permission for closing the doors of the dams and construction of piers. Centre has nothing to do with permission while Chief Minister is dragging centre just for political leverage.

Gohil said that the issue of closing of the doors was not relevant since Gujarat can provide Narmada water to people provided it has canal work ready. For this no permission is needed, he pointed out. It is already cleared. How can he recharge dams of Saurashtra when canal work is not ready and MP is raising objections to use of surplus water by Gujarat, Gohil wondered.

Instead of giving benefits of farmer centric Narmada project to most needy people, Chief Minister has started giving its advantage to his industrialist friends. Gohil

rolled out figures which show that Gujarat was slicing off Narmada command area for the benefit of industrialists by setting up Special Investment Regions and Special Economic Zones.

He said that 28,000 hectare of land of Bhal area was denotified for setting up Dholera SIR. This is in Narmada command area. Similarly, 13,000 hectare command area land around Sanand has been denotified for SIR and GIDC. Other such cases are, he said, 45259 hectare of Bharuch and Vagra taluka for petroleum and petrochemical SIR, 16800 hectare of Aliabet for entertainment SIR, 16674 hectare of villages of Santalpur and Radhanpur taluka has been denotified for a SIR and 12229 hectare of Halol, Kalol and Savali taluka for a SIR. Much of this land is of Narmada command area.

In addition to this, state government plan for 11 other SIR will make landless thousands of farmers of Sanand , Bavala, Bhachau, Anjar, Bhuj, Malia, Mandal, Sami Bahucharaji, Dabhoi and Tilakwada. Government also has proposal for SEZs which will require a total of 319.78 Sq kms in different parts of the state, mainly in the command area. Government cannot denotify this land since the command area is defined and demarcated by the Tribunal.

Gohil cited example of Rajasthan to drive home his point that sincere implementation of scheme can work miracle. Rajasthan has a share of 0.5 MAF and command area of 75,000 hectare. But through innovative irrigation schemes, Rajasthan has an operational command area of 2.25 lakh hectare. Gujarat gets 9 MAF with command area of 16.08 lakh hectare, but it has not increased even an inch. On the other hand, Gohil said, Gujarat has worked in five lakh hectare only.

Why leaders of other political parties were not invited to speak a programme organized by NGOs on Narmada, he asked. Gohil challenged Modi to discuss issues of Narmada project on a public platform. He reminded Modi of days when Chief Ministers used to hold all party meetings. Why this practice has been stopped, he asked. At the same time he extended full support to Gujarat government in smooth and quick implementation of the project.

To,
The Editor,

Former Leader of Opposition has requested to kindly publish this press note in your esteemed newspaper.

(Sunil Rami)
Personal Assistant